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Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

Adrian Wijemanne

- *Tamil Eelam's Right to Secede*

Gamini Wickremaratne

- *Negotiating the Tamil Eelam borders*

Ajit Rupasinghe

- *Politics of the Refugee Crisis*

Charles Somasundram

- *What next after fall of Jaffna*

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED BY THE TAMIL EELAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (TEEDOR)

16 MARCH 1997 *LONDON, UK*

CALL FOR PAPERS

TOWARDS MEETING THE ENERGY REQUIREMENTS OF TAMIL EELAM

TEEDOR is pleased to announce a major International Symposium of a full day's programme on the theme 'Towards meeting the energy requirements' of the de facto State of Tamil Eelam on Sunday, 16th March 1997 at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. The conference is aimed at addressing the immediate and future energy requirements and to consider alternative sources of energy, appropriate technology and energy economics pertaining to the development objectives and programmes of Tamil Eelam technical/economic viewpoints If you wish to submit a paper to this symposium please send us the original to reach us by 14th February 1997 to the TEEDOR Conference Co-ordinator.

Present background and immediate energy scenario:

The post October 1995 onslaught by overwhelming Government military forces equipped with modern weaponry on the Tamil civilian people, has also resulted in a diabolical and systematic destruction of the economic and social infrastructure of their homelands in the Northern and the Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

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- Wave
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ii) Fossil Fuel

- Thermal power generation using fuel oil, coal, tar sands, shaleoil, orimulsion or geothermal energy. The range of optimal generating capacities, location, environmental considerations and investment and production economics.
- Consolidation and assessment of existing geological and geophysical studies for hydrocarbon bearing structures in the onshore and offshore areas of Tamil Eelam.
- The long-term case for economics and financing of further exploration, drilling and feasiblity studies and consideration of joint venture partnerships.

For further information contact:

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Hot Spring

A journal of commitment

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From the War Front
Elephant Pass
Jaffna Lagoon
Paranthan

LTTE OVERRUNS 2 MILITARY CAMPS, AND CAPTURE AND DESTROY SEVERAL ARMOURIES

Over 200 Sri Lankan troops were killed and hundreds more badly injured when LTTE forces overran two military complexes at Paranthan and Elephant Pass on 9th January. The LTTE also achieved their strategic objective of nullifying Sri Lanka's fire power in the region by capturing or destroying several long-range artillery pieces, which were used systematically to launch indiscriminate attacks on civilian-populated Tamil villages.

Eleven long-range artillery pieces and several armouries were destroyed when LTTE commando units penetrated Sri Lankan forward defence lines extending 10 kilometres. Nine of the artillery pieces demolished were size 122 mm, while the other two were 133 mm. Several ammunition dumps were also wiped out. In addition vast quantities of arms were captured including three 120mm mortars, three 50-calibre machine guns and hundreds of automatic guns, along with vast amounts of mortar shells and ammunition.

The attack on the Elephant Pass camp took the government by surprise because the area links the mainland with the Jaffna peninsula, while the overrunning of the Paranthan camp isolated the troops in Kilinochchi town. The government suffered further losses when the Tigers set fire to all the food, fuel and ammunition stores in the Paranthan camp.

The LTTE lost 140 fighters in the heavy battles. After the Tigers withdrew from the scene, Sri Lankan Kfir jet bombers, Puccara war planes and MI-24 fighter helicopters began pounding indiscriminately the surrounding villages in a bid to avenge what was seen as the second biggest military reverse the government suffered after it lost its Mullaitivu base along with the loss of nearly 1,500 troops.

It was also learnt that the government refused to accept 29 recovered bodies of Sri Lankan soldiers which the LTTE had handed over to the ICRC.

"WHAT THEY SAY"

"The LTTE speaks on behalf of the Tamil people As far as the Tamil people are concerned, democracy has failed.This call for separation was first voiced by democratic Tamil parties such as the TULF Therefore, the demand for a separate state is not a demand of the LTTE, but it is the demand of the Tamil people"

- Cabinet Minister S.Thondaman, in an interview with SUNDAY LEADER, Colombo, December 29, 1996

* * * * *

"Jaffna is geographically less fertile than our areas Somebody told me that you can get gems everywhere other than that particular area of Sri Lanka. That is why Jaffna people have to be as industrious as they are. This does not mean they are more brainy".

- Media Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake, in an interview with WEEKEND EXPRESS, December 28-29, 1996

* * * * *

"The government only controls the city of Jaffna and the main road to Kilinochchi, the entire jungle areas on either side, up to Mullaitivu are controlled by the LTTE. So, how can you implement the devolution package above the heads of the LTTE?"

- Anura Bandaranaike in an interview with SUNDAY LEADER, Jan, 5. '97.

* * * * *

"The LTTE struck back when it overran the Mullaitivu camp to inflict the worst ever blow to the Army. Some 1500 troops died in that calamity, and in any other country the head of the Army would have resigned. But the government took cover under a prolonged media censorship on the cockeyed, if not crazy presumption that what the people did not know,did not happen".

Editorial comment, SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo, Dec. 29, 1996

* * * * *

"This is a normal gesture during Christmas. If you want to read a deeper meaning into it, it's your business".

- an LTTE source on the release of 16 captured Sinhalese fishermen by the LTTE.

"Our people are now losing all their confidence in her (President Kumaratunga) although we still harbour a bit of hope that all is not lost and a solution is still possible".

pro-Government EPDP leader Douglas Devananda in an interview with INDIAN EXPRESS, Nov. 30, 1996

* * * * *

International

'As far as I am concerned, this report is all propaganda. The news from that area is always one-sided because journalists are not allowed to go in there and they only hear from one side. Nobody hears anything about the Tamil Tigers to balance the story".

- Mrs.Betty Wilby, mother of Adele Balasingham speaking from her Warragul home in Australia to Andrew Bolt in Hong Kong, when asked about Lankapuvath's fictitious story about LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham being placed under house arrest.

* * * * *

"Oh. God, no !I would never ever get married again"

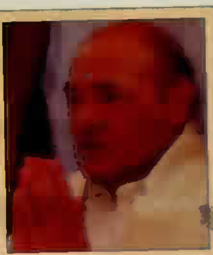
- Elizabeth Taylor, after announcing she was divorcing for the eighth time.

* * * * *

"We operate on a knife edge If we lose our competitivenessr, or fail to maintain racial harmony, or lower standards of government,we are finished, permanently. Singapore is either outstanding or it is nothing "

- Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

* * * * *



"When I don't take a decision, it's not that I don't think about it. I think about it and take a decision not to take a decision"

- former Indian Prime Minister P.Narasimha Rao, defending his reputation for indecisiveness.

* * * * *

"If an accord is forcefully imposed on Cyprus without sufficient guarantees,the smallest incident between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots may explode the whole of Cyprus like a volcano"

- Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash

* * * * *

"The Cuban people have lived under tyranny for too long. We must sustain our efforts to hasten the arrival of democracy in Cuba" :

- U.S. President Bill Clinton

* * * * *

"I have already been married off six times. The day I really get married, no one will take me seriously"*

- Indian film actress Madhuri Dixit.

On the Cover

Hot Spring
Adrian Wijemanno
Gamini Wickremaratne
Ajit Rupasinghe
Charles Somasundaram

Remembering Kittu

Adorning our cover this month is the photograph of a man who occupied a pivotal role in Eelam Tamil life for a period of ten years. But alas, -four years ago this month - on January 16, 1993, Sathasivam Krishnakumar (Col. Kittu) gave up his life ~ in the high seas, a victim of high-handed terrorism by a regional super power on international waters. Along with him perished nine Tiger compatriots.

As Tiger commander in Jaffna, his valours on the battlefield are known, but not all knew what a multi-faceted personality Kittu was. He could be equally at home at any situation in life - whether in leading his men on the battlefield, or in negotiating with the enemy with perfect aplomb; or in-parleying with Indian Intelligence in Madras, or in later years, holding his own with political dignitaries and foreign corrspondents in London and Switzerland.

President Chandrika's husband, the late SLMP leader, Vijaya Kumaratunga on his goodwill visit to Jaffna in 1986 found in Kittu not only a dedicated fighter, but an affable Tiger! So did six-footer Sinhala Captain Jayantha Kotelawala, who found in Kittu an enemy whom he could trust.

On the 29th March 1987, unseen hands tossed a bomb at his car, and Kittu lost a leg. But he never lost his spirit. Denied a chance to take part in active combat, his innate talents blossomed in other directions. Sent by his leader to the West, he took English language lessons through the telephone and quickly became proficient in the language, streamlined the entire European network of the LTTE, put more pep into their publications, kept everyone on their toes, and within two years raised the image of the LTTE in the international arena.

It was said of the "ten-headed" King Ravana, that it was a symbolic way of describing the ten different talents or aspects of his personality. Kittu in his own way was a master of many things. He was not just a brave fighter and a born leader of men, but an able organiser, a skilful diplomat, excellent with his PR in his new western surroundings, an enthusiastic photographer, a keen painter in his spare time, a convert to Piccaso, a good cook (!), a lover of music, in short. a well-rounded personality.

In losing Kittu the future Tamil Eelam lost one of its most valuable assets.

S.Sivanayagam

Tamil Eelam's Right to Secede: A historical perspective

Adrian Wijemanne

The perils of the historical perspective.

1. History has often been pressed into service by both sides in war. The war in Sri Lanka is no exception. Sinhala nationalists have enrolled history on their side to give legitimacy to their unyielding stand on majoritarian rule. Tamil nationalists reach back to the pre-Christian period to support their national identity and its territorial grounding. The polemic is now so volluminous that a professor of history at one the universities in Sri Lanka has written a recent book on "historiography" (i.e. the manipulation of history) in times of conflict. The common factor is that both sides return to medieval times and go no further- the Sinhalese to their 6th century Mahavansa, the Tamils to the 13th century kingdom of king Sankili. History seems to stop there and go no further. More surprising still history is confined to the historical record in Sri Lanka; the history of other countries with similar problems is ignored. The modern history of our nearest neighbours to the North and East is never mentioned and yet it holds lessons of great relevance for Sri Lanka.
2. To the student of history, history is a continum coming right down to the present day. The shrinking of time and space brings the history and experiences of distant countries into our lives. The lessons of those experiences are inescapable. The factors which determine the marking of history in other countries are equally at work in our own country and could well produce similar outcomes. Wars are especially vital linking factors which link the combatants in one country to many agencies and organizations in other countries. For example, the Sinhala side to the conflict in Sri Lanka arms itself with military supplies bought abroad. It is now well aware of the enormous, and rising, costs of state of the art molitary hardware. It knows it cannot buy many items of such equipment for lack of funds. The historical trend of the rising sophistication of modern military weaponry and of the exponential escalation of its cost is a vital factor impinging on the war in Sri Lanka. The return to medieval history cannot insulate us from modern battelground realities.

The lessons of history.

In seeking the lessons of history we need to identify the elements of relevance to our own situation. The first requisite for this is a clear understanding of the conflict. In Sri Lanka the conflict is the product of a very deep cleavage which is not all that common in other parts of the world. In Sri Lanka the cleavage is†:

I. Ethno- Territorial i.e.†: Two distinct ethnic groups grounded in distinct, adjacent, compact territorial areas as the majority population in each such area over a long, historical span of time.

II. Linguo- Cultural i.e.: Each ethnic group is possessed of its own language written in its distinctive alphabetical script and equipped with a long evoled and distinct cultural tradition.

III. Religious i.e.: The vast majority of each ethnic group adheres to a distinct religion, the Sinhala being Buddhist and the Tamil being Hindu. There are Christians in the middle class of each of these ethnic groups, but they have proved to be powerless as a reconciling factor.

3. In the 3 ethnic conflicts now raging simultaneously in India so deep a cleavage does not manifest itself in any.

   In the Punjab the cleavage is ethnic- territorial and religious but not lingo- cultural for the Punjab language is but a minor variant of Hindi and culturally Sikhs and Hindus are one.

   In Assam the cleavage is even less, only ethnic territorial, there being no great difference linguo - culturally or in religion.

   In Kashmir the cleavage is ethnic territorial and deeply religious but not linguo- cultural.

4. In Myanmar the wars of secession by the several tribal peoples on the western, northern and eastern peripheries of the state have overtones of religious cleavage as some of the tribal peoples are Christians and others animist. The ethnic cleavage is minimal and so is the linguo- cultural especially as many of the tribal languages are not written ones but only oral.

5. In the Philippines the cleavage in the Moro (Moor) war of secession is only territorial and reigious but not ethnic nor linguistic. Both Philippines and Moros are of the same ethnic stock and speak Tagolog. The conflict is between Christianity and Islam.

6. In Pakistan in the sixties the East Pakistan rebellion was based on an ethno-territorial and linguo-cultural cleavage, but not a religious one. Both parties were, and are, Islamic. Yet they could not be reconciled wthin a single state.

7. In the Sudan the cleavage is just as deep as in Sri Lanka- ethno-territorial, linguo-cultural and religious, with the Christian/ Islamic religious cleavage being much sharper than in Sri Lanka. The war there has proved to be as incapable of a military or constitutional solution as in Sri Lanka. The Sudan is one of the world's poorest countries and soon found it could not afford both to pay for the war and at the same time foot the bill for civil government. As is commonly the case in such situations (Myanmar and Ethiopia and others) it was civil government that was dispensed with and replaced by a military dictatorship. Even that has proved unavailing in producing a military victory. The war goes on, unwinnable, unendable and driving down the living standards of the people into grinding poverty.

8. Another case in which the cleavage was almost as deep was in the U.K. The Irish war of independence was based on ethno-territorial, linguo-cultural and religious cleavage oven though the religious cleavage was only between two branches of the Christian family Protestant (Great Britain) and Roman Catholic(Ireland). Irish nationalism which arose out of that cleavage eventually dismembered the U.K. and divided it into two separate sovereign states. Only then could peace be secured.

Moro Islamic guerrillas at their camp in Western Mindanao

NATIONALISM

9. The emergence of a separate unique national consciousness is one of the features of post French revolution history. Nationalism often combines all three elements of the cleavage present in Sri Lanka and then takes its form- Ethnic nationalism. The Nationalism of the Sinhala people is ethnic nationalism; so too is that of the Tamils, Sinhala nationalism attempts to leap the barrier of ethno-territorial reality and to deny the existence of the vibrant nationalism of its great neighbour, the indigenous Tamil nation in the island. **That is, and will be proved to be, its undoing in the misconceived war in which it is engaged. The legitimancy of Sinhala nationalism will be restored when it is confined to the territory occupied by its people and when it takes account of the nationalism of others.**

10. A nationalist war of secession, especially a guerilla war fought on the guerilla's home ground, is not capable of being ended by constitutional devices which seek to contain the warring nations within the straight jacket of a single state. The 4 wars of this type that have been concluded by partition into separate sovereign states for which the guerillas fought. We are witnessing now the painful emergence of a similar peace in Palestine.

11. **In Sri Lanka too there is no other way in which the war can be brought to an end. The writing of the moving finger of history is upon the wall. When it will happen will depend on when one of the world's poorest countries will crumble under the weight of military expenditure. As things stand now it will not be long.**

THE SUNDAY LEADER

Time to negotiate the Tamil Eelam borders, says a *Sinhalese*

Gamini Wickremaratne

The ways of the English-language Colombo Press is by and large predictable, so it came as a pleasant surprise that the SUNDAY LEADER had both the courage and good sense to lend its columns in its issue of December 22 to an article written by GAMINI WICKREMARATNE titled : A SUBVERSIVE CASE FOR EELAM. Written with pugnacity and verve, and containing many home truths, the article is a tribute to the writer, as well as the Editor who thought fit to publish it.

HOT SPRING brings a few extracts from the article;

....Why should the Tamils, who now have Eelam within their grasp, put up with this nonsense, which is getting the country - both us and them - no where? Why should they subject themselves to the incompetence, corruption and arrogance of successive Sinhalese governments? Well, you say, because they are a minority living in sufferance in this Sinhala land of ours. Well, what the Eelam struggle is all about is proving that equation wrong.

The Tamils sacrificed (according to our own figures) between 30,000 and 50,000 of their best young men and women so far in their struggle for Eelam. Have they done this in order to elect themselves to provincial councils or even regional assemblies? Don't kid yourself . There is one goal only: Eelam, however long and hard the battle may be. Nothing less will do, and nothing else will even be sniffed at. What is perhaps negotiable is just what the boundaries of Eelam will be. If negotiations are to begin, that is where they will commence.

....The Tamil Diaspora is quite the opposite. It is, in west, exposed to the overt romanticism of warfare, victorious warfare.

We must not make the mistake of thinking that Tamil peasant emigrants will always be just that: Tamil peasant emigrants. What of the Tamils in the diaspora, in Canada, America, Switzerland and Germany? We are told there are upto 800,000 of them. Let me tell you what: they are getting plenty of experience of the disciplined work - ethic of the west. They are learning how to use computers and modern technology, to sow in the winter and reap in the summer; to driving on the correct side of the street and acting as part of a developed society; to come to work on time; to speak English, French and German. All in all, they constitute, like the European Jewry, an incredibly rich man power resource: enterpreneurs, doctors, engineers, technicians. And most importanly, they are accustomed to have only as many children as they can afford and not breed like rabbits, with reckless abandon, as we Sinhalese do. While retaining their identity, they have absorbed all that is progressive about the west.

If and when they return to Sri Lanka, they come back as professionals and workers who know how to make another Singapore. And each of them can bring back a capital base which will leave us speechless. If 200,000 Tamils each brings in the cost of a small apartment in the US,$50,000, what is the available investment capital? A staggering Rs.570 billion! Enough to pay off our national debt or run the country, Samurdhi and all, for two years. And why will the Tamils come back? Simply because the grass will be greener in Tamil Eelam. And us lazy, indolent Sinhalese, will simply be dust under their chariot wheels, talking about the good old days 2,500 years ago, when we had the world's best irrigation system. Bogged down by so - called Buddhist dogma, enshrouded in paranoia reminiscent of the worst kind as practised by Iranian ayatollahs, without even the vaguest semblance of social discipline, what hope could we have?

....The quality of our civilisation is dubious, and the Tamils deserve a chance to dry to improve at least their lot, if we have abandoned ours. Note that it is the Muslims and Buddhists who pollute the air at dawn every day with their religious ideas being blasted uninvited to their neighbourhoods, not the Hindus or the Christians. The latter are altogether more subtle people. Should Tamil Eelam become a reality, and assuming they will permit us, it will be us Sinhalese who are queuing up at the border, whether it be Vavuniya, Mahiyangana or Tissamaharama,to go and earn better wages in their labour - intensive silicon valleys, just as 400,000 Palestinians and Jordanians do at the gates of Israel every morning; and as Malaysians do in Singapore.

We Sinhalas have an uncanny knack for getting it wrong. In the 1960s and 70s we drove out the Burghers, one of the great civilising forces we had . In the 1980s and 90s we drove out the Tamils. Don't be fooled , the Burghers will never return to Sri Lanka, and neither will Tamils, because they do not want to be lorded over by a mob of betel-chewing thugs and bullies, loosely calling itself a government, be it UNP, PA or anything else. When they come back, it is to Eelam that they will flock.

Just assume for a moment that we do win the war, like General Ratwatte tells us. What then? Well, you don't have far to look. Take the case of Jaffna. It is now one year since our victorious army marched in there and took it over. Having done which, they handed it over to whom? Need you ask? The Sinhalese politicians and their henchmen. Granted, there are no credible Tamil polititians to hand Jaffna over to. Prabhakaran has seen to that. The quislings who under the cover of Sinhalese guns went and stole a handful of votes in Jaffna in 1994 hold court only in Colombo, with their Pajeros and armed thugs. Set foot in Jaffna , and if Pirabhakaran doesn't get them, they'd probably by lynched by the ordinary folk who suffered untold hardship this past decade and would not now want to see the vultures swoop in to grab such spoils as yet remain. But having taken Jaffna one year ago, what have we done wth it? Nothing. No development, no administration, no fertiliser, no electricity, no transport, no courts of law, no hospitals. And a rampant black market, rapes, murders and disappearances galore to boot. One whole year, and we have proved beyond all doubt that even if we win the war, we are utterly at a loss as to what to do next!

....And the desire of the Tamil people to rid themselves of the Sinhalese millstone around their necks probably will endure beyond the lifetime of Prabakaran and his LTTE.

....As little as we like to concede the point, the fact is that there are areas of Sri Lanka which intuitively we know are essentially Tamil. It is entirely irrelevant as to how long ago Tamil-speaking people came to ocupy this land. The fact is that it has a Tamil identity. The local lingua franca is Tamil, the shops have their names in Tamil, and the language of commerce is Tamil. There may be (or might once have been) Sinhalese living among these Tamils, but that dose not deny the identity of the Tamils any more than we commonly think people originating from south of the Bentota River as southerners. Besides, the term "border villages" has unconsciously grown into our vocabulary, including the state-owned press, tacitly acknowledging the existence of a border. We might not like it, but that is the reality.

So the tide of history flows inexorably in the direction of Eelam. As little as the nationalists might like it, that is the writing on the wall. We should negotiate the borders, the terms of future relations between the two countries and the establishment of a secular democracy in that territory before it is too late. Continued resistence hostility and bitterness on our part can only impoverish us both: like it has India and Pakistan.

We have the recent history of south Asia to learn from, and our children will not forgive us should we fail to read the writing on the wall now.

POLITICS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

PRESENTATION MADE AT KATHMANDU SEMINAR

By Ajit Rupasinghe

I wish to address myself to the politics of the escalating refugee crisis in Sri Lanka because it may serve to bring out some important political issues pertiaining to the problem of refugees in general.

In discussing the question of refugees, migrants and stateless persons, it is important to focus on the character of the modern Nation-State. The State is the dominant and focal institutional concentration of political power which articulates and perpetuates the system of social relations in a given society. It is the system of social and productive relations maintained and reproduced by the structure of state power that fundamentally accounts for and generates civil conflict.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the modern state was constructed by the British Colonial Administration in league with dominant Sinhala political elites. The result was a majoritarian form of hegemonic parliamentary rule that entrenched the power and privilege of the Sinhala Buddhist majority over that of all other ethnic, religious and national minorities.

The first act of the new state was to disenfranchise the entire Indian Tamil population - plantation workers brought in by the British Colonial Administration from South India as bonded labour. This was achieved by denying them their right of citizenship through a majority vote in parliament.

From there followed a systematic policy of discrimination, violent repression and subjugation carried out against the Tamil nation in the North East. This policy was intensified by all successive governments. Discrimination was intensified with a vengeance in all spheres-language, religion, education, employment, land alienation, and in development policy.

The armed Tamil National Liberation Movement arose as a result of the failure of the Tamil parliamentary representatives to

win any demands through decades of peaceful, constitutional struggle and in the face of mounting armed state repression.

Whatever the weaknesses and distortions in the line and vision, in the leadership, in the strategy and program, and forms of struggle of the armed national liberation movement, the clear fact is that the State is fundamentally accountable and responsible for having generated and intensified this crisis.

This is why it is important to address the character of the nation state in dealing with the question of refugees, migrants and stateless persons.

Magnitude and Dimensions of Refugee Crisis

The latest government figures published by the Ministry of Shipping, Ports, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction indicate that there is a total population of 785, 187 persons displaced as at 30th October 1996. Out of this total, 691, 618 are from the North-East Province and 60,668 are from the bordering districts. This entire region being subjected to civil conflict gives a total of some 752,286 persons internally displaced and rendered destitute as a direct consequence of the civil war. The worst affected areas are in the Northern Province accounting for some 628,293 internally displaced persons.

The official government figures are misleading in that they are based on the issue of dry rations/cash and World Food Program (WFP) assistance, whereas a great number of people have been deprived of any form of sustainable livelihood who do not have access to government assistance in the North.

This brings up the question of how we define refugees. It is misleading to limit such a definition to those who have been compelled to leave their homes due to political violence. The fact is that the entire population of the North and the majority population in the East and in the border villages have been deprived of any form of sustainable livelihood and have been reduced to a sub-human level of survival. They too are refugees held hostage by political processes beyond their control.

For our purposes, we should define refugees as those who have been compelled to abandon their homes and/or those who have no sustainable means of livelihood, as a consequence of social and political processes beyond their control.

Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons in the Vanni- the heartland of the North- virtually live under trees- without adequate shelter, food, water, medical supplies or sanitation facilities. Given the onset of the North-East monsoon, it is expected that there will be widespread epidemics, including hepatitis, meningitis, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, malaria and other diseases. Along with this, some of the existing vital infrastructure has been destroyed by incessant and indiscriminate bombing and shelling. including the Kilinochchi hospital.

> *"..... The entire population of the North and the majority population in the East, and in the border villages have been deprived of any from of sustainable livelihood....."*

The people of this entire region have suffered the brutal consequences of this civil war for some 13 years. Most have been displaced more than once, some for several years at a time. Many had sought refuge in South India. Some had returned only to be caught up once again in a cycle of war and some have begun to return to India. But they are now being interdicted on the high seas by the combined efforts of the Indian and Sri Lankan navies. Some have sought refuge in other countries and now find themselves being hounded, harassed and forced to return, where they are set upon by the security agencies. Wherever they find refuge, they are met with callous indifference, enforced means of subsistence and political harassment, based on a denial of the most elementary human and democratic rights.

As it was before the resumption of hostilities, the plight of the refugees both within and outside Sri Lanka was pathetic. Apart from the sub-human conditions prevailing in the camps, they were subjected to other forms of abuse. Some were forcibly resettled when security conditions were not stable simply for the propaganda value of claiming that these areas were under government control. Some were resettled in areas they did not like and where conditions were deplorable. Powerful politicians and bureaucrats accumulated vast sums of money by their control over the relief. rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. Yet, the refugee population had no effective voice, no political power to have their grievances heard, let alone addressed.

Now, with the eruption of the third stage of Eelam War, the refugee situation has reached unprecedented proportions and dimensions constituting a spiralling mass scale humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, there do not seem to be any immediate prospects for a negotiated political settlement. The indictments brought against the LTTE on some 720 counts, including mass murder, constitute unparalleled legal and political barriers against opening lines of communication, let alone negotiations. The indictments are meant to de-legitimise and criminalise the LTTE. This would have the most profound consequences militarily and politically. It appears that the government is committed to dragging out the war with the objective of gaining a final and decisive military victory over the LTTE. This can only mean a further Militarisation and internationalisation of the conflict and more intensive destruction. These developments are bound to further magnify and compound the refugee crisis.

This immense suffering, this colossal human degradation and the repeated cycle of brutal and destructive civil war, which has plunged the whole of society into an abysmal economic, political, social and moral crisis, is fundamentally the result of the inability of the Sri Lankan state to address the issue of the right of national self-determination of the Tamil people in this region.

Both the Sri Lankan State and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have used the refugee crisis for political advantage. The State has used the refusal of emergency aid and assistance as a political weapon to course the population into submission on the basis of claiming to deny supplies to the LTTE, while the LTTE has used the crisis to expose the government, to harden attitudes against the state and to increase recruitment. Both have restricted the free movement of the civilian population.

While the fact that in a state of war it is expected that each side will strive to use everything possible for its own advantage, the denial of emergency relief by a state to its own population, hurled into a sheer, sub-human struggle for survival by a political logic beyond their control, is unacceptable and intolerable by any standards.

At the same time, there is a virtual censorship in the fact that humanitarian agencies, peace activists and journalists are restricted from visiting the area, which prevents the world from knowing the full facts of the situation. Truly, the refugees are a hostage population caught in a viscous logic of escalating political victimisation that they neither wish nor control.

Most seriously, the entire international community has virtually remained either ineffective or silent about this humanitarian crisis. Foreign governments have, in effect, complied with the decisions and policies of the State. Some- particularly those who are most strident in crusading against international terrorism, even provide the funds, the weapons and the diplomatic support and sanction to perpetuate it. The fact is that the killing fields all over the world have become the hunting grounds for major regional and international powers to carve out their own strategic terrain regardless of the cost in human lives and the suffering visited upon masses of innocent people.

All these events demonstrate the stark fact that refugees do not possess any form of effective political power. They are one of the most dis-empowered and the most vulnerable of all social groups in the modern world. and their numbers will magnify a thousand-fold since all signs indicate that the so called new world order is characterised by more intense violent cataclysmic political upheaval than anything we have yet known, including throughout the South Asian Region.

In this context, the effort to draw up a Regime of Rights for Refugees in the form of a Protocol is most timely and urgent. Yet it must not be confined to a policy of lobbying and advocacy. The existing international agencies, including the UNHCR, have been pathetically ineffective in dealing with the current crisis. The major international and regional powers are complying with and providing material and diplomatic support to the Sri Lankan State in perpetuating the crisis. Along with the effort to establish a Protocol, we must strive to build the organisational forms and mechanisms to effectively empower the refugees, migrants and displaced people in South Asia so they may articulate, fight for and defend their fundamental human and democratic rights as an independent political force. We must combine all our efforts by networking and mobilising all our resources and constituencies so that we can become a force for democratic transformation throughout South Asia such that the problem of refugees, migrants and displaced persons will be relegated to the status of research and curiosity on historical antiquities. If we have the vision, the courage and the determination to unite as the people of South Asia, then we can begin to have some real political leverage. Then we can define a people-based, human-centred strategy and forms of collective struggle to ensure that our protocol is indeed respected and implemented. This would be a long and arduous process. But we must begin somewhere. Or else, we too may become unwitting pawns in the prevailing game of international, regional and domestic politics.

I wish to end by congratulating the South Asia Forum for Human Rights and all those present for their noble commitment and contribution to making this prodigious task a success. *

VASANTHA-RAJAH on

THE PA's BLIND MARCH TOWARDS DISASTER

An economist who accompanied a recent British trade delegation to Sri Lanka told me (to use his own words) "the Sri Lankan economy is in ruin and any prospective long term investor who sees the ground situation there would be totally put off by what he sees." I was not surprised. The central intention of all my analyses during the past year was to bring home the fact that the government's relentless military efforts to crush the Tamil struggle will inevitably result not only in military disasters for the occupying Sinhala troops but, also, would plunge the entire country into an economic and political 'black hole'.

My conclusions were based on several considerations.

First, the historical experience: all nationalist struggles, past or present, aimed at securing the right to self-determination have either ended up victoriously for the nationalists or dragged on inconclusively causing enormous economic and political damage to the states involved, not to mention incalculable human sufferings.

Second, when you compare the failures of far more economically superior states to defeat nationalist guerrillas fighting from their home ground, the chances of Sri Lanka - which is extremely vulnerable economically and also very politically volatile - of achieving military success at any time in the future against the LTTE - perhaps the most sophisticated guerilla organisation in the world - are preposterously slim.

Third, the political aspect of the government's strategy, aimed at marginalising the LTTE from the Tamil people, remains based on an acute and profound ignorance of the strong bond that exists between the leadership and the people entangled in a national liberation struggle.

The existence of this bond I know not only from a historical appreciation of the evolution of Tamil nationalism (which consolidated in direct response to the Sinhala-dominated government's persistant and increasingly brutal efforts to undermine the Tamil sense of nationhood) but also from my personal visits to the North during the LTTE-administration. The latter convinced me beyond rational doubt that any government effort to drive a wedge between the LTTE and the Tamil people would be an exercise in futility. The bond between the LTTE and the Tamil people was (and remains) a highly intimate one, far away from the misleading picture generated for years in the South. Therefore, I was certain that the military forces occupying regions in the North and East would get trapped in a vicious-circle that would eventually alienate the Tamil people more and more.

My predictions are regularly being confirmed by events in army-occupied territories. According to the government Administrative Office in Jaffna, nearly 800 Tamil civilians have disappeared since May '96 in Jaffna alone. The Red Cross in Jaffna says as many as 600 people visit their offices every week seeking information on people who have disappeared in army custody. We regularly get reports of arbitrary arrests, rapes and killings of civilians. Rev. Chelliah Phillip Nesiakumar at St. John's Church in Jaffna said (in December), "Nobody ventures out of their homes after dark because of fears of being arrested by the military." That is the real ground situation in the government's so-called 'liberated' areas.

This was powerfully confirmed by a primary source. I met a South Indian catholic priest, Reverend Father Gaspars, who visited London recently. He is the Director of the Tamil section of Veritas Radio, based in Manila (in the Philippines). His world service programme receives over six hundred letters every week from Tamil listeners living in the military-occupied areas in the North. He showed me samples of these tragic letters which are a heart-rending confimation of all that I have been hearing from other sources.

Then at a wedding in London recently I met an old Tamil woman and her daughter who visited Jaffna just before the Mullaitivu attack. Although she was reluctant at first to speak out fearing army reprisals against her relations in Jaffna, the mother told me her experiences amid repeated expressions of her wish to remain anonymous. In addition to confirming all I have mentioned above she also spoke of how people desperately yearned for the return of the LTTE administration.

Indeed, the military occupation of the North has done a tremendous service to the LTTE, consolidating its leadership among the Tamil people even more rigidly, and it has also elevated Tamil national consciousness to a new high. If the present state of affairs persists I predict an 'Intifada' erupting against the Sinhala troops. This is not a remote possibility but a developing scenario and anyone watching the situation keenly and, shall we say, honestly, would already sense the emerging signals.

Quite apart from my above-mentioned arguments - call them historical and pragmatic - against the government's present policy, there is a 'utility' argument pertinent especially to the business class. The business community in Colombo, whose interests are firmly rooted in the fast developing global economy, cannot be ignorant of the fact that the government's desperate efforts to defend the occupying troops in parts of the Tamil homeland by annually spending billions of ruppees have no relevance to this class's economic interests. In terms of modern economics, the Colombo government's relentless struggle to maintain its hegemony over the rebellious North and East - at any cost - does not make sound economic sense. In fact, the war has been the single most damaging factor for the economic well-being of Southern-based investors.

Indeed, the one and only incentive for the Sinhala-dominated government to pursue the war seems to be nothing other than fossilized chauvinist sentiments based on historical myths, i.e., to subvert the independent existence of the Tamil nation in their historically evolved homeland and turn them into an 'ethnic minority' living in the Sinhala-Buddhist country - to turn them into 'tennants' in a Sinhala-Buddhist 'household'. This springs from what many journalists have already coined 'the Mahavamsa-mindset'. It is a frame of reference which is proving to be the greatest damaging influence on the progress of the country, its economy and its people.

Anybody with even a cursory understanding of contemporary global economics would know very well that the size of a territory or the population of a given country has no direct relevance to its prosperity. Hence, even if a radical re-arrangement of the existing state-structure along confederationist lines - granting virtual independence to a Tamil and Sinhala unit - is established, there are no grounds to believe it would damage the existing economy in the least. If anything, it would enhance the ability of both sides to prosper.

Well what, then, is the reason for the Sinhala government's determination to defend its hegemony (even if it is a 'lesser degree' of hegemony) over the Tamil nation, sacrificing thousands of Sinhala youth and risking economic and political ruin? Again, the answer is chauvinism - pure and simple - against which there is a strong 'moral' argument.

> ***The "Mahavamsa mindset" is proving to be the greatest damaging influence on the progress of the country...***

Nobody doubts that during the anti-imperialist struggle against British rule, Sinhala nationalism played a progressive and legitimate role. But the British-imposed 'unitary state' paved the way for the Sinhala political establishment to dominate the state and, thereby use it for Tamil-bashing and whipping up anti-Tamil hysteria among the Sinhala electorate. That is how Sinhala nationalism became transformed historically into Sinhala chauvinism. Tamil nationalism, on the other hand, still retains its legitimacy as a political weapon, in this instance, to win the right of self-determination for the Tamil nation. This is a perfectly legitimate aspiration which has been developing systematically since independence. The fact that in 1977 the Tamil nation voted for separation in no uncertain terms is a telling indication of the speed at which Tamil national consciousness has been developing.

The Tamil struggle (when correctly seen) is a continuation of a global transformation towards ever more democratic forms. This is a phenomenon that actually emerged in the West a few centuries ago. It has taken different forms at various episodes in history. Anti-imperialist struggles waged by former colonies dominated the globe during the first half of the 20th century. Today we see a similar phenomenon on a global scale, but this time the strugglers are numerically smaller nations fighting against artificial state-structures being imposed on them by numerically bigger nations. The democratic principle involved here too is the right of self-determination of a nation.

It is this fundamental democratic right the Sinhala-dominated government is presently denying to the Tamil nation by continuing its military occupation of Tamil cities. Instead, the government should withdraw the forces and negotiate with the LTTE on an equal basis and try to construct imaginative voluntary state-structures that would accommodate the aspirations of both nations. That is the only meaningful path towards ending a war which can otherwise only continue leading the people of this island to economic, political and moral ruin.

Ecological disaster in Tamil areas

Maharasingam writes to Malcolm Rifkind

In a 5-page letter addressed to British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Malcolm Rifkind sent on Human Rights Day, 10 December 1996, Tamil Action Committee Chairman Sinnappu Maharasingam has drawn the attention of the Minister to several aspects of Human Rights violations against Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Among other matters he has made specific reference to the grievous damage being done to the eco-system in Tamil areas by the Sri Lankan military. Here are some excerpts from the letter:

The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind Qc, MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW 1A 2AH
10 December 1996

Dear Foreign Secretary

Today is Intenational Human rights Day and this is our 16th consecutive year of appeal to HMG highlighting the Sri Lankan government's continued attempt to supress the Tamil right to the land, language, culture and political voice. This denial of Tamil identity has led to thirteen years of intractable Tamil armed struggle, by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to the right of self-determination. Since 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom (the year the 6th Amendment of the Constitution was passed to proscribe the elected Tamil political party - Tamil United Liberation on Front (TULF) and also the year the Tamils began to flee from fear of persecution to the United Kingdom as refugees) Sri Lankan security forces stand accused of rape, torture, disapperance, murder, rape (Amnesty International "urgent Report) and aerial bombardment resulting in the fleeing abroad as refgees and internal displacement of over a million Tamil men, women and children.

Palmyrah palms in Jaffna

Tamil villages are reduced to the ground by motor fire and aerial bombardment (3a). This destruction has also caused irreparable destruction of the dry-zone eco-sysstem within the north and east, which are home to unique fauna and flora. The palmyra palms, unique to Jaffna peninsula and a symbol of "katpakatharu", a mythical name in Tamil, meaning a "giver of that what is asked", tall and majestic, capable of living to one hunded years and has the capacity to retain moisture from seasonal monsoon rains is facing ecological genocide. These palms are to the Tamils, what the bison was to the American Indian. Under the long years of economic blockade of the Sri Lankan armed forces and under continued indiscriminate bombing and motor shelling, people were compelled to cut down these palm trees to build bunkers for house to house shelters and firewood. Under army occupation, reliable sources inform us, the army has cut down over 200,000 palm trees for the construction of army camps, bunkers and for transportion as valuble timber to the Sinhala south.

The same fate is befalling the coconut palms along the coastal streches of the eastern Tamil Homelands. The latest destruction is the indiscriminate burning down of forests in Kilinochchi, Mullativu and other Vanni homelands by the Sinhala security forces in search of the elusive Tamil Tiger camps. From this ecological genocide, man, woman and child have no protection and are fleeing - over a million. Their lands are occupied by armed Sinhala settlers. This pattern of ethnic cleansing is gradual. In facist Germany, the Jewish people had no homeland base to rise up against the tyranny of Hitler. Xenophobia spread like wild fire, and five million perished. With the Tamils, it is ecological genocide that is taking place.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE FALL OF JAFFNA - WHAT NEXT?

by Charles Somasundrum

Jaffna has been conquered five times within the last five hundred years - beginning with the Portuguese early in the 16th century, later by the Dutch in the 17th, and by the British in the l9th.

Coming to modern times, Indian forces captured it in 1987, and over one year ago,it came under Sinhala military occupation.

What of the future ? Conquering territory is one thing, holding it is another, says CHARLES SOMASUNDRUM in this article.

The question asked by quite a few concerned Tamils of the Diaspora is, why is it that the Tigers were not prepared for the unprecedented attack, in late 1995, by the Sinhalas on Eelam? This question is not surprising. Most of these Tamils have been out of touch with the scene of action in Eelam for far too long. Their hearts are, however, in the right place. There will always te a little bit of Eelam wherever in the world they may live. This lack of knowledge is not surprising in the light of the repressive ban on the reporting of the war by the Sinhala government. Some of us Tamils who live away from Eelam however, continue to receive news of what is going on, through smuggled out video cassettes, audio cassettes, printouts

Pre-Sinhala occupation Jaffna: Nallur Kandasamy temple 'Chapparam' festival with thousands of worshippers.

Jaffna may be conquered, but can never be subjugated

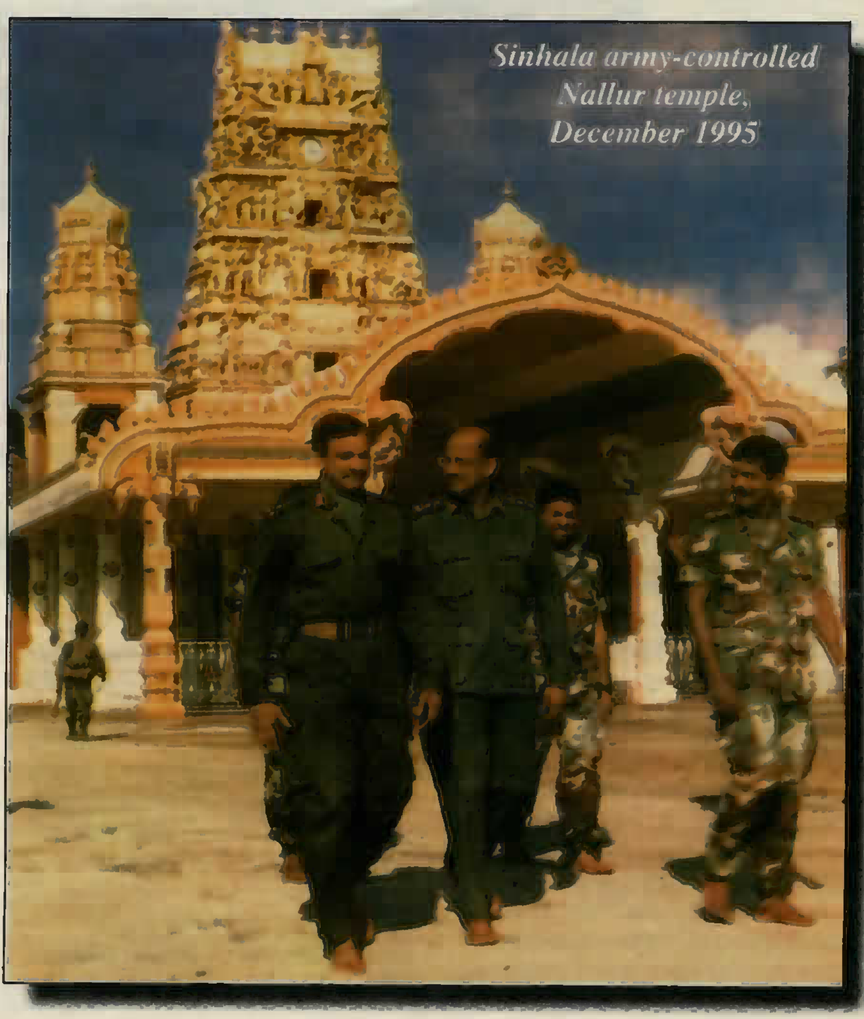
from internet - shared amongst fellow Tamils and the occasional newsletter and press release from Eelam. I would claim that, despite the censorship of news from war torn Eelam, we are better informed about the war against the Tamils than most people living in Sri Lanka. Most of us Tamils living abroad, show a keen and active interest in what is happening back home and share our concerns and whatever information we may have, with fellow Tamils.

Sad to say, there are a few Tamils living amongst us, who are trying to forget their roots. Such people are usually found slumped in plush chairs, with a glass of red wine in-their hands, at some social gathering or other, pontificating about the Eelam war and the Tigers, their total knowledge, based on third hand scraps of information that may have accidentally come their way. There is a Sinhala term for such people-***Kalu Suddhas*** Black Englishman. Fortunately, such people are the exception. The less said about them the better. They live in their personal cloud cuckoo land!

Let me take this question of whether our Eelam brethren were ready or not for the unprecedented attack on Jaffna.

As we now know, the Sinhala government had decided that they had to have a high profile victory over the Eelam Tamils, to satisfy their impatient Sinhala Buddhist voters that they meant business. After all, they were getting the poor chumps (sorry for the colloquial expression) to cough up for all this, by their Defence Levy and the increased cost of living. As Vasantha-Raja says in his recent publication Tamil Exodus and Beyond - *On the political front, the government has bluntly backed off from its promise to abolish the Executive Presidency. On the welfare front, it has failed to introduce the promised unemployment benefit and the family allowance for the poor, On the economic front it has failed to create the 500, 000 jobs it promised within one year.* With Sri Lanka spending 29 billion rupees per year (of money they do not have) on the war against the Eelam Tamils (not just the Tigers mind you), they are unable keep their promises to the Sinhala man in the street: This was the reason for their high profile Rape of Jaffna The early Romans tried the same thing to distract their citizens with their ***Bread & Circuses*** and the throwing of Christians to the lions. The Sinhala government put all its eggs in one basket for a high profile victory - regardless of expense. In the words of General Amarjit Singh Kalkat, who commanded the abortive Indian expedition to Jaffna, as quoted by Vasantha - Rajah, The Sinhalas -

"*... followed a strategy of a* Broad Front *.. now a Broad Front advance is a very secure method of doing it because you can never be off-balance. But to do a Broad Front you need large forces, which they have got. It is much more time consuming. You need time, which they have got; they're in no hurry. And thirdly, it causes a lot of* destruction *(my emphasis) because you are actually steamrolling through the area. Step by step. Do a certain distance first, then clean up, converge on the next one. Any building from which resistance comes or where there is likely to be resistance, bring it down with air bombing or with tank fire...* You clean up. *But then as you pass you 're leaving behind rubble as you go. So that was the other problem - for which they have resorted to* cen-


Sinhala army-controlled
Nallur temple,
December 1995

sorship *my emphasis) so that this doesn come out. They have concentrated overwhelming force for a Broad Front and they have made sure that there is no adverse publicity. World opinion, the press, don't know what is happening there because it's all controlled "*

The attack was on a Broad Front. I saw TV footage (provided by the Sinhala army), on British television, after the attack by the Eelam Tigers on the Central Bank, the nerve centre of Sinhala commerce, and saw what this meant. The footage showed Sinhala tanks ploughing through tobacco and onion fields in Jaffna. There were no people about. The clear intention was to destroy. **Is it not clear why the *Tigers* advised all Tamils to leave the scene of the Sinhala advance?**

The Sinhala intention was to destroy without compunction. As Vasantha -Raja says in his publication - *"The very fact that the government opted for a **Broad Front military strategy**- which amounts to 'steam rolling' through enemy territory and indiscriminately destroying lives and property - shows the utter contempt it has for ordinary Tamil people"*

Jaffna before the Sinhala bombing and shelling: a carefully tended chilli garden and ripe red chilli druying in the foreground.

The Tiger leadership showed concern for the Eelam Tamils in advising them to leave the areas affected by the Sinhala advance and take refuge in areas where they could protect them. Tiger military strategy has always been unconventional but brilliantly logical and thought-through. Some of us may remember the IPKF advance on Jaffna where the Tigers did not advise the population to withdraw but made a tactical withdrawal themselves. Even though they withdrew, they harried the Indian forces so much that the Indians lost countless officers and men, not to mention tanks. The Tiger force was not as well equipped then as now. They were fighting battle seasoned Gurkhas, Marathas and Punjabis, with a force of, mostly, teenage young boys and girls who had no previous experience of conventional warfare. On that occasion, the Tiger leadership, who were able to predict the form the Indian attack would take, did not ask the people to leave the City of Jaffna. The Indians were not adopting a Broad Front strategy. The Indians were always accompanied by the world press and they dared not attack civilians. True, there was the massacre at the Jaffna hospital and a more serious one at Vallvettithurai later on. Both these massacres were highlighted in the world press immediately and resulted in the then Indian commander being replaced. The Indians made instant reparations in both instances. I visited the Jaffna hospital with a cousin of my wife, when I was holidaying there in 1989, a time when Jaffna was under Indian control. The whole hospital had been renovated and redecorated with Terrazzo flooring installed everywhere. The Jaffna hospital had never looked better.

The 1995 Sinhala bombing of St Peter's Church at Navaly - after Sinhala planes dropped leafiets asking civilians to take refuge in Churches and Temples - did not merit mention in the world press. Journalists were not permitted into the war Zone. The western press have accepted this restriction meekly. After all, the Tamil Foreign Minister of Sinhala Sri Lanka has been traversing the corridors of power of western chancelleries seeking their help in the cover up of the Sinhala ethnic cleansing in Tamil Eelam. He had something to offer them in return. The purchase of arms and weapons of destruction from the world powers in return for silence from the world press. As a boy I remember, I used to believe in the Freedom of the Press of western democracies as opposed to so-called Communist Totalitariar, Governments. I used to read of fiercely independent journalists who reported what they saw and hang the consequences! I read about famous newspaper proprietors who stood for the truth. I have since learnt, over the years, that there is no such thing as a Free Press. To digress - the sinking of the Lusitania which brought the Americans into World War I and saved the British bacon, something the world learnt of long after World War II; the sale of oil to the Nazis by the British and American oil companies while their governments were fighting the Nazis, there was also, the cover up by the British press, of the Edward Simpson affair till the King's abdication became inevitable. There are many such cases too numerous to mention. In every instance we are now told the press was aware but covered up the truth. No! the Free Press is a myth and should take its place with Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy.

As regards the Navaly church bombing, the ICRC (International Red Cross Committee) who made an adverse comment were told that they had to withdraw their remarks if they wanted to continue in Sri Lanka while, the Government Agent in Jaffna (a Tamil man), was recalled to Colombo for his critical comments, and I believe, sacked.

The Tigers made it hell for the Indians, when they controlled Jaffna. I remember having lunch with the same cousin of my wife with whom I visited the Jaffna hospital, at a 'Chinese' restaurant in Second Cross Street when I was in Jaffna in 1989. We were in the front room overlooking the road with all the windows wide open. There were some men working on the telephone lines by the roadside, guarded by a platoon of Punjabis. Suddenly shots rang out. It was a Tiger sniper. The Indians returned fire at random, they did not know where the sniper was. The people in the restaurant including the two of us, calmly took their plates and went to the rear veranda of the house which served as the restaurant and returned to their seats after the shooting died down. Well, to be frank, the other people were calm. As for me, my heart was in my mouth. I had a similar experience on another day in the evening, also in the company of this same ubiquitous cousin, when Tiger snipers attacked the Indians guarding the house of the mother of the then leader of the EPRLF, a man called Varatharaj Perumal. He was subsequently Chief Minister of the short lived Regional Council that the Indians set up in Trincomalee. The Tigers though they had withdrawn, harried the Indians at every turn. The Indians dared not drop their guard even for a second.

Believe me, the Sinhala army of occupation is not going to have an easy time in Jaffna. I see the Sinhalas withdrawing to armed camps in the north before long, and the status quo ante being restored.

On the issue of whether the Tigers had expected an attack of such magnitude, as was the case of the 1995 attack on Jaffna, I do not blame some of the Tamils for their belief that it was ***unprecedente***. Most of the major battles and Tiger victories have been kept from the public eye. There are the famous battles of Palaly, Mullaitivu, Elephant Pass and Manal Aru (now referred to by the Sinhalas as Weli Oya, where Sinhala colonists - mostly IRC's (Island Reconvicted Criminals) and their families - have been armed and settled. (Israelis are doing their little bit there, to help in the Holocaust of the Tamil nation by the Sinhalas). In most of these battles, the Sinhalas lost more men and equipment than in the battle for Jaffna. I have a copy of Adele Anne's excellent book, ***Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers***. She gives detailed descriptions of the various major battles with eye witness accounts from some of the women soldiers who took part. Sorry, these are too numerous to list here.

Incidentally, in Tiger controlled Eelam, the Tigers have abolished the Dowry System, the Caste System; banned the felling of trees and recognised an equal place for women. I have a Tiger calendar before me and it highlights in red, the X of March which is International Women's Day. Believe me, give a free Tamil Eelam five years and Sinhala Sri Lanka will be left far behind.

Let me conclude with these two aphorisms. It is easy to conquer territory but holding it is another matter. A nation can be conquered but never subjugated.

Letter to the Editor

THE RIGHT OF SELF- DETERMINATION AND THE RIGHT OF SECESSION

I refer to Dr. Surya Subedi's article under title "The Tamil Struggle For Autonomy in International Law" in the November -December issue of the Hotspring.

The right of self-determination is a principle of free will that is recognised by international law to be inherent in a people who evoke that right to extricate themselves from a political authority above them.

The Tamils of Ceylon ceased to have a political authority above them with the lawful abolition of the Soulbury Constitution in 1972. The two draft constitutions which the Sinhalese produced in 1972 and 1978 were never validated. They are simply draft constitutions with no legal status. With no political authority above them the Tamils need not evoke the right of self-determination. They already have free and independent status in international law. They are under the military occupation of Singhalese invaders and large parts of Tamil land in their eastern province have been unlawfully taken away by the invaders. The international community could play a useful role in persuading the Sinhalese to give up Tamil land and get off Tamil territory.

The right to secede becomes relevant when a people wish to break off from a lawful state. Without a legitimate constitution in Sri-Lanka the right of the Tamils to secede does not arise. The Tamils are already separate and independent. There will be nothing illegal if the Tamils proclaim their independence and go about drafting a constitution to apply to their homeland in the north and east.

P. Varothayasingham

Life in the Northeast

ARMY REPRISAL AGAINST CIVILIANS

The Sri Lankan army has stormed a Tamil village shooting randomly and looting homes. An elderly woman Thiagarasa Sellamma (75) received severe gunshot wounds during the raid on Nagar Kovil (Vadamaradchy) and many cattle are reported dead. The attack comes soon after an LTTE claymore mine killed three Sri Lankan soldiers. Residents say the subsequent raid on their village is typical of army "reprisals" against Tamil civilians for military losses. In the ensuing mayhem Sinhala soldiers snatched radios, torchlights and cash belonging to the Tamil people of the village.

A TAMIL MOTHER'S GRIEF

The mother of a Tamil student taken for interrogation by the Sri Lankan army has been told suddenly her son is not in their custody. Captain Bandara, head of the Jaffna army camp (in army-occupied Jaffna) told Leela Navamani to "clear off" and not bother him anymore. Captain Bandara had been the man who arrested her son at home during a midnight 'visit' and every day since then Mrs Navamani has turned up at the army camp begging to see her child. For the first few days Captain Bandara assured her the boy, a student of St John's College (Jaffna), would be released soon but suddenly one day told her no such person had been arrested. The incident, one of a growing number of such cases, has provoked fears among relatives that the boy may have been killed while in custody.

Disappearances of Tamils are growing at a disturbing rate in army-occupied territory where more and more decomposed Tamil bodies are being discovered in shallow graves and young Tamils' bodies are regularly seen floating ashore tied in army sacks. Three other Tamils who recently met the same fate as Mrs Navamani's son are: Selvarajah Prabhakaran (24) of Thatchanthoppu, cycle-repairer Mahadeva (46) of Jaffna and Co-operative Society guard Kanthasamy Sukunarajah (38) of Ariyalai.

LTTE HAS LOST OVER 9000 FIGHTERS SINCE 1982

The following is a comprehensive list of all LTTE fighters who have died since the beginning of the Tamil liberation struggle up until 30 November 1996.

TOTAL LTTE FIGHTERS KILLED:	**9301**
BREAKDOWN INTO MALE AND FEMALE DEATHS	
Total LTTE male fighters killed overall:	**8222**
Total LTTE female fighters killed overall:	**1079**
BREAKDOWN OF BLACK TIGERS KILLED	
Male Black Tigers:	**33**
Female Black Tigers:	**00**
Male Black Sea Tigers:	**45**
Female Black Sea Tigers:	**16**
TOTAL	**94**

ARMY TAKES OVER REFUGEE CENTRE

Sri Lankan security forces have evicted many displaced Tamils from a German-funded refugee shelter in Mandoor and turned it into a new base for themselves. The shelter had been built with money given by Germany for the task of housing Tamil people displaced by Sri Lankan military offensives in the island's east. Literally hundreds of Tamil families have now been thrown onto the streets and are still searching for places to live. Security forces have also taken over a number of council buildings in the area which has severely affected day to day administration of the town.

ARMY CASUALTIES IN EAST

Though Sri Lanka greatly exaggerates the number of LTTE fighters it has killed in the past year, the actual number of Sri Lankan soldiers who have been killed in the Amparai and Batticaloa districts is staggering. In 1996 alone 563 Sri Lankan soldiers, including a large contingent of elite STF personnel, died in these two eastern districts.

ARMY FIRING ON NEW YEAR DAY

The Sri Lankan army in Batticaloa celebrated the new year by firing rounds of ammunition into neighbouring Tamil residential areas. Residents in several parts of the district reported similar behaviour from all Sri Lankan army camps in the region. The firing generally lasted for half an hour during which time hundreds of Tamils were forced to leave their homes and run for cover further afield. Such behaviour by Sri Lankan armed forces has become characteristic of their rule in military-occupied Tamil areas of the north-east.

A CASE OF BRUTAL INTERROGATION

Sri Lankan STF commandos on New Years Day morning subjected all Tamil residents of Pandiruppu (in Batticaloa) to a brutal interrogation. Locals were ordered to assemble at

Life in the Northeast

the STF camp with identity documents at the ready. The people were kept there for the whole day undergoing procedures which most of them later described as "brutal". The families of some 25 Tamils detained at the army camp after the incident are anxiously concerned for their safety since Sinhala soldiers in occupied Tamil territory are notorious for rapes, torture and murder of Tamils in custody.

TAMIL HOUSES DEMOLISHED

16 Tamil houses were demolished and 100 Tamil families displaced by Sri Lanka's latest military operation in the Tamil heartland. Operation Rivigaya took place in Batticaloa and, like all other Sri Lankan military operations, showed no respect for the lives and property of the Tamil people.

TAMIL SCHOOLS TO BE TAKEN OVER

The Sri Lankan army is forging plans to take over certain Tamil schools in Batticaloa in order to make army camps out of them. Schools on the Senkalady-Badulla road (Batticaloa) have already been earmarked and as usual there have been no efforts to relocate the students who will be affected. But Tamil residents of the densely-populated areas of Karadiyanaru and Siththul are making preparations to vacate since living close to a Sri Lankan army camp is by itself a terrifying prospect for Tamils.

ARMY PATROL INTERCEPTED

Two Sri Lankan soldiers died when the LTTE intercepted an army patrol which had advanced 600 metres from the Jeyanthiya camp in Batticaloa. The Sri Lankan soldiers immediately fled leaving a quantity of arms and ammunition. One LTTE fighter, Lt Thirumaran, also died in the incident.

3 ARMY CAMPS WITHDRAWN

In fear of growing LTTE strength in the east, the Sri Lankan army has withdrawn a further three army camps in Amparai, moving soldiers to more concentrated sites. Pakkiyella, Nugalantha, and Walaweli camps have all been recently evacuated. The insecurity of Sri Lankan soldiers occupying certain Tamil lands in the east was heightened recently after the LTTE's major assault on the Pulukunavai elite STF base in which many commandos were killed.

"MARCH FOR MEDICINE" - in the Vanni

Many thousands of Tamils across Vanni district have handed over petitions to OXFAM, MSF, CARE and ICRC after mass protests on 7 January. The demonstrations, massively attended in Mankulam, Mallavi, Thunnukai, Pandiankulam and other neighbouring areas, was the Tamil people's way of condemning Sri Lanka's food and medicine ban to their areas. Sri Lanka at present has in place a strict block on essential medical items which stops Tamils obtaining even the pain-killer Panadol. Many leading members of the Vanni community at the demo condemned Sri Lanka's policy saying it used medicine as a weapon of war to cripple the Tamil people not living under its own areas of occupation. The protest saw schoolchildren, teachers, businessmen, doctors and even some hospital patients take to the streets and issue an appeal to the President, Opposition leader and Health minister to withdraw their inhuman policy against the Tamil people. A series of public speeches then took place at the Vanni sports ground where, among others, one doctor Sivapalan told the crowd, "While Sri Lanka poses to the world as a model of piety and social justice, behind closed doors it carries out a merciless destruction of the Tamil people." He pointed out that the international community had been made blind to the desperation of the Tamils. "Where else in the world do people have to clamour like this just for the right to receive food and medicine?" he said.

A number of recent independent surveys have shown that malnutrition and death from curable diseases is rife among the Tamil population in these areas as a direct result of the government's food and medicine policy. But since Sri Lanka also bans journalists from visiting these traditional Tamil areas in the north-east, news of these horrendous conditions and of the escalating anti-government protests, go largely unreported.

NO VACCINES FOR TAMIL CHILDREN

The triple-vaccine for Tamil children in Mullaitivu (Vanni district) has been out of stock for the last month with no sign of it reappearing. The Sri Lankan government continues to stop any medical supplies going through to the Vanni. Incidence of malaria, cerebral malaria, dysentery, typhoid and septicaemia in Vanni have shot up dramatically in recent months but with diminishing medical stocks most patients are turned away without the barest treatment. Doctors at Mullaitivu hospital say it may soon have to close altogether because the shortages are so severe.

Life in the Northeast

ARMY TORTURE ON THE RISE

Two more cases of severe torture committed by the Sri Lankan army against Tamil civilians has come to light in Vadamaradchy (Jaffna). In one, Tamil youth Ponnar Sinnathurai Sureskumar from Alvai was kept in an army camp for ten days after being arrested on December 16. His dead body was later handed over to his family with the explanation that an accident had occurred. But it was clear from the marks on his body that he had been subjected to some of the worst forms of torture. Another Tamil youth was arrested on the same day. Though he was deaf and dumb he was severely tortured and beaten while in army custody. He has been placed in a nearby hospital but doctors have said his chances of survival are poor.

SIX ARMY POSTS IN MANNAR OVERRUN

Eight Sri Lankan soldiers died and many more were injured after a dawn raid by the LTTE on six military checkpoints in the Tamil area of Thanthrimalai (Mannar district). The six military posts, which stretched over a distance of 300 metres, were targeted simultaneously. There were no LTTE casualties and a significant amount of arms and ammunition was captured.

GIRL SHOT ON CHRISTMAS DAY

A Sri Lankan soldier in Eravur shot and killed a small Tamil girl who was out picking flowers on Christmas Day. Witnesses say she died on the spot. The Sinhala soldier had noticed the girl from his position at the 5th Division checkpoint while she gathered flowers in the field opposite. After a moment he opened fire on her. The girl's parents say their daughter had been collecting flowers to decorate the framed picture of Jesus Christ in their home.

ETHNIC CLEANSING IN TRINCO

Tamils in Trincomalee are being driven from their homes by Sri Lankan armed forces to make way for Sinhala settlers. The town council chairman of the district says the Sri Lankan government has accelerated its colonisation of Tamil parts of Trincomalee. Convoys of Sinhala settlers are arriving and replacing previously Tamil areas. Even ancient Hindu temples and Tamil cemeteries have been converted to make way for the new colonisers. Town chairman Mr Suriyamoorthy says there is no doubt the Sri Lankan government's plan is to turn Trincomalee - a traditionally Tamil district - into a Sinhala colony. Under strict restrictions on news reporting from the north and east the Sri Lankan government has been utilising its freedom to covertly carry out its colonisation projects.

THANDIKULAM - A HELL ON EARTH

Tamil travellers have described the Thandikulam army barrier - the only means of going north from Vavuniya - as "hell on earth". The Sinhala soldiers manning the checkpoint are said to wilfully inflict trauma on the Tamil people who have to travel past them daily. Random beatings, bullying and cruelty are the order of the day. It is reported that more and more Tamil travellers are arrested after being falsely accused of trying to take food and medicines to unoccupied Tamil territory. The Sri Lankan government still prohibits food, medicines, umbrellas, matches and even ladies' sanitary towels from reaching Tamil areas it does not occupy.

DOCTORS WARN OF IMPENDING PANIC

With 600 Tamils a day flocking for medical treatment at Mankulam hospital the head doctor says panic is finally setting in. Medical stocks, particularly Penicillin and anti-venom injections, have run dry under the government's ban on medicines to unoccupied Tamil territory leading to escalating cases of illness. Doctors admit the problem is spiralling out of control with no sign of an end. Meanwhile medical supplies at Mallavi hospital have also run out. Despite doctors notifying the government health department of the impending crisis no response has been forthcoming. The Sri Lankan government's denial of essential items has ensured that Tamil people are falling victim to countless diseases with malaria, typhoid, diarrhoea and dysentery among the most common.

WOMAN FOUND DEAD BY ROADSIDE

A Tamil woman has been found dead on a drenched street in Vavuniya with her new-born baby screaming by her side. The pregnant woman had been suffering from medical complications and was due in Colombo for treatment. But Sri Lankan military officials cut short her journey at Vavuniya forcing her to remain in a house near one of the notorious

Life in the Northeast

detention centres refusing to permit her passage to Colombo. They ignored her repeated pleas to leave Vavuniya. On the night of 26th December Kandasamy Vijayakumari ventured out in the heavy rain desperately seeking medical attention. She didn't get far. A passer-by found her dead body in a puddle with her new-born child lying alive next to her. The baby was rushed to a hospital but doctors were unable to save him. Kandasamy Vijayakumari was 33 and a mother of three other children. She came from Mankulam.

POPE'S ENVOY TOURS JAFFNA

A representative of the Vatican who toured Sri Lankan army-occupied Jaffna peninsula has expressed his dismay and horror at conditions there. After an official tour of the region in which he saw the extent of army-damaged buildings and woefully inadequate rehabilitation efforts he told the Bishop of Jaffna of his deep sorrow for the Tamil people. During Sri Lanka's military operations to capture the ancient Tamil heartland of Jaffna indiscriminate bombing of public and private buildings was routine. According to some journalists 80% of buildings in Jaffna town had been demolished by Sri Lanka's military assaults.

JAFFNA FUNDS MISUSED

A massive portion of Jaffna's rehabilitation funds which the Sri Lankan government has obtained from various donors is to be used for rebuilding the police station, say government sources. Although the government's allocation of funds for restoring Jaffna are known to be inadequate by any standards, the disproportionate amount being directed towards the police station is being seen by locals as a cynical move showing no concern for their basic needs. Residents of army-occupied Jaffna are at the moment without proper sanitary conditions and many do not have homes as most were shelled during recent Sri Lankan military operations. Up to now, no reconstruction work has been carried out in Jaffna.

TAMIL WOMEN IN TRAIN ARRESTED

Four Tamil women on a train bound for Trincomalee have been taken into custody by police. The Sinhala police boarded the Colombo train at Kantalai station to do a routine search. The fact that some of these Tamil women were carrying a considerable amount of money was seen as sufficient reason to pull them from the train and arrest them. Tamils are routinely subjected to indignities like this which they are powerless to resist due to the considerable powers Sri Lankan police have been given over the arrest and detention of Tamils. The four women were undergoing interrogation, when reports came in.

13 TAMIL YOUTHS ARRESTED

Dehiwala police stormed into a lodge in Galle Road (Colombo) and arrested 13 Tamil youth including a girl. The victims of this arbitrary raid are now in a remand jail where their fate remains uncertain. Many original Jaffna Tamils have been arrested in this manner by the predominantly Sinhalese police force in Colombo. Many have later been kept sometimes for years without their cases ever coming to trial.

"HEALTH WEEK" SURVEY IN THE VANNI

A health survey conducted in Tamil Vanni, a region which remains unoccupied by Sri Lankan troops, reveals that malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis and typhoid - in that order - are the main afflictions suffered by the Tamil people. The incidence of these illnesses has shot up in consequence of Sri Lanka's effective blockade on food and medicine to Tamil areas not under military occupation. The government's long-term strategy has been to try and "cripple" Tamils into submitting to Sri Lankan military authority. The LTTE has been trying to ease the people's hardships by organising major health initiatives aimed at promoting a cleaner environment and various self-help strategies.

EDUCATION CENTRE STARTED

The LTTE civil administartion in conjunction with laocal NGOs have started an education centre for displaced Tamol children at Mulankavil (Kilinochchi district). Over 400 displaced Tamil children will benefit from the educational scheme which is jointly run by the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) and the Pooneryn-Mulankavil Development Society. Children from 4th standard up to G.C.E "O" Level will be taught at the centre. The teachers are paid by TRO and the Pooneryn-Mulankavil Development Society.

Disappearances in army-controlled Jaffna: Amnesty International's concern

Thamban Paskaran, from Kaithady North, Jaffna district, has not been seen since 10 December 1996, when he was asked to report to the Kaithady army camp. He did so but failed to return home. When his wife went to make inquiries the next day, she was told that he had escaped-from custody around 9.30pm on 10 December. However, he did not return home nor did the army come to look for him.

Fears for Thamban Paskaran's safety are heightened by reports over recent months of the killing of several people who had 'disappeared' in army custody in Jaffna district, including in Kaithady army camp.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the security forces regained control over the Jaffna peninsula from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in late 1995 - early 1996, there have been continuing reports of arbitrary arrests and torture, including rape, and 'disappearances' in custody. In particular the number of 'disappearances' reported has been of serious concern. Amnesty International has so far submitted more than 200 cases of people who were seen taken into custody but whose detention was subsequently denied by the security forces to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. It has urged that an independent and impartial investigation be instituted to establish their fate or whereabouts. Local human rights organizations and Tamil members of parliament have also repeatedly brought cases of 'disappearances' to the attention of the President and other authorities.

In response, the establishment of a unit in the Ministry of Defence with responsibility for the investigation of 'disappearances' was announced on 13 December. In addition, the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF), an official body set up to safeguard the welfare of detainees, has been given permission in principle to establish an office in the Jaffna peninsula. Officers of the HRTF visited Jaffna in mid-November. They were reportedly provided with a list of more than 500 names of people who have 'disappeared' in the custody of the security forces in the Jaffna peninsula, which they are checking against a list of detainees provided by the security forces.

Since the government came to power in August 1994, Amnesty international has urged that crucial steps should be taken to prevent 'disappearances' from happening, especially after such violations started to be reported again following the resumption of the armed conflict between the LTTE and the security forces in April 1995. Between April 1995 and March 1996, Amnesty international recorded 62 'disappearances', mostly from the east and from the capital, Colombo.

Among the measures recommended by Amnesty international for the prevention of 'disappearances' were amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations, which allow for people to be held in the custody of the security forces for long periods of time, and for the perpetrators of these grave human rights violations to be brought to justice. To date, no substantial changes have been made to these legal provisions. In addition, impunity remains a major concern. There remains a pattern of proliferation and duplication of investigative units and commissions, rather than concerted action on the findings of those already in existence.

CALL FOR ACTION

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the 'disappearance' of Thamban Paskaran after his arrest on 10 December. Amnesty International urges the Sri Lankan government to (a) establish an independent and impartial investigation into his 'disappearance' and all other cases reported to the President, the findings of which should be made public, and (b) bring all those responsible for these violations to justice. Amnesty international also urges the Sri Lankan government to take all necessary measures to bring a halt to the enduring practice of 'disappearances' in Sri Lanka.

Tamil youth killed while in army custody

A 17-year old Tamil youth, Rasanayagam Maharajan was taken away by army men on the 22nd December '96 at about 4 p.m. and his dead body was handed over at the General hospital, Batticaloa the same day at 7 p.m. Accusing the army authorities of murder, the mother of the youth, Mrs.Kandapper Nadeswary of 2nd Division, Thirupalugamam, Periya - Porativu, Eastern Province has sent a protest letter to the Presidential Commission at Nº.64, Horton, Place, Colombo 7.

The youth was a student at Shivananda Vidyalayam, Batticaloa, and. was staying at a relation's house at Kallady, when he was taken away.

Jaffna disappearances are reaching alarming proportions, meanwhile. At the same time, some armed Tamil groups supporting the government are stated to be busy setting up offices in Jaffna.

Kadirgamar in the "Traitors' Gallery"

How do the Tamils (and even thinking Sinhalese) view Lakshman Kadirgamar's role in the office of Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka? To sum up in one word, he is DESPISED.

This is the vivid impression that a reader gets while going through a 16-page "monograph" titled: SHAME ON YOU KADIRGAMAR, published by the **International Tamil Foundation** in London. The International Tamil Foundation is a small independent body of professionals, that functions as a "think tank". and promotes talks and discussions on issues that affect the Eelam Tamils.

The brochure contains excerpts from the BBC interview with the man on 12 October,Adrian Wijemanne's response to that interview. open letters addressed to him by Lt Col Anton N.J.Selvadurai who was his contemporary at Trinity College, and by S.W.Rajah, a challenge to him by Prof. Kopan Mahadeva asking him to publish the letters exchanged between President Kumaratunga and the LTTE leader, and relevant excerpts from various sources.

Coming particularly hard on Kadirgamar is the last page unsigned article titled TRAITORS' GALLERY, which stands out as a knowledgeable, skilled polemic on the subject. We reproduce parts of it here for the benefit of HOT SPRING readers;

"We have chosen as our first honorary inmate of the Traitors' Asylum Her Excellency's principal stool pigeon and Minister for Foreign Affairs, none other than the super annuated Colombo lawyer LK, who by accident more than design, was parachuted into SLFP territory hy none other than that master tactician, Neelan Tiruchelvam. For LK, was all but a faithful poodle of the late Ranasinghe Premadasa, and a member of the President's Foreign Policy Studies Committee His claim to be an expert in this field arises from his only having been a minor and petty official in a small UN outfit in Geneva where he presumably suffered many a twitting from his superiors - for, that explains his abrasive conduct with senior UN officials including telling off Boutros Ghali and his posturings vis-a-vis the Colombo diplomatic community. What LK lost in Stature, he seeks to make up in bombast.

What explains the success of LK? He did not scintillate at the bar. coming nowhere near his illustrious brother, Sam Kadirgamar Q.C. There was not much for him to claim by way of any glittering secondary school career. Nor was Oxford kind. He does not have a degree from that university worth the name. Only the Presidency of the Oxford Union, occupied later by his second cousin Jeyasunthari Wilson,D.Phil. (Oxon)..

Why do we call him a sucker? According to the OED's definition, "a sucker is a person who is easily deceived".For that is what LK is all about Somebody at F.J. and G de Saram took him for a ride; and Tawahkal's had the last laugh. Of course he ended up landing Her Excellency's government in grave trouble. Way back in 1958-60, LK was flirting with Tamil politics ... (now) Madam President decided that the Foreign Affairs portfolio will be L.K.'s metier and sure, hy Sinhala Buddhist standards. he is the PA government's success story.

But has LK done any great things to warrant a Palmerstonian garland ? or a footnote in history. No change in foreign policy, not even any modification of his government's earlier unique contributions to the international non-aligned movement It is not for him to be either a S.W.R D.Bandaranaike or Madame Srimav Bandaranaike. Instead he tiptoes in the corridors of the foreign office chancelleries. His mind is not attuned to innovation. Instead LK rides his favourite hobby horse - the Tamil expatriate community and their alleged funding of the war against the Sinhala Buddhist terrorist state LK has thus taken to tilting at windmills and not even frequent trips to Washington, New Delhi or pressure on West European capitals have borne results. LK's consuming ambition is to prove to his Sinhala Buddhist masters that he can produce results. He does all this in the face of the increasing butchering of innocent Tamil people and brutality against their women, children and old men How can he sit in his Buddha-like posture in the island's legislature and be unaffected by the most dreadful onslaught of an Auchwitzian type juggernaut. Either he is decieving his masters or decieving himself In the end, LK is playing the role of a faithful domestic to his Sinhala Buddhist masters......

LK is the scion of a respectable and much honoured Tamil Christian family from Jaffna. Today many of his kinsmen have reason to be ashamed of their relationship and to unhesitatingly condemn his disgraceful behaviour. Our prayer is that he will be persuaded to abandon the self-seeking path he has chosen for himself.".

Malaysian Tamils write to Indian leaders

"GET SRI LANKA TO LIFT ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OR AIRDROP SUPPLIES TO TAMILS"

The Council for Advancement of World Tamils in Kuala-Lumpur, Malaysia has sent a letter to Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda, pressing for immediate intervention by India on behalf of the suffering Tamils in Sri Lanka. Copies of the letter have been sent also to Foreign Minister I.K.Gujral, Finance Minister P.Chidambaram, and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi. A delegation of the Council will be going to India to press the demands.

The following is the text of the letter:

Your Excellency,

The Tamil people of Malaysia have watched with growing horror the sufferings of our kith and kin in Sri lanka as a direct result of the war being waged upon them by the government of Sri lanka in contravention of all the provisions of the Geneva Convention. As Mahatma Gandhi pointed out at the time of Jallianwala Bhag **"A Government that wages war against its own people forfeits its rights to govern them".**

In this situation the **Council For Advancement of World Tamils Malaysia,** notes with concern policy statements on Sri lanka by Prime Minister Deve Gowda to the effect "once bitten, twice shy" about prospects of a new Indian initiative to find a solution to the crisis there although this has been further clarified by Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral to mean that India would do nothing to help the Government of Sri lanka to wage war against the Tamil people there.

With deep respect the Council is obliged to point out that such a policy is negative and does not align with India's perennial and abiding geo-political interests in the region which she has inherited even from the days of Chera-Chola-Pandya Kings of Tamil Aham. She can abdicate this inheritance only on peril of inviting to her southern shores threats to her security which have traditionally arisen from the Indian Ocean during European colonialism - the present American intrevention in Sri lanka is very much in line with such a scenario.

Rajiv Gandhi supported this policy of intervention in Sri lanka by this likely scenario. The Council is of the view that he was, therefore, perfectly justified in air-dropping food and medical supplies to the economically blockaded Tamil people, although this meant an invasion without permission into foreign air space.The people of India welcomed it, the people of Tamil Nadu welcomed it, the World Tamils Nadu welcomed it, tht people of Jaffna welcomed it, and it had a healthy impact on India's own national integration situation.

Most regrettably Rajiv failed to follow through this intiative to its logical conclusion and settle it along the grain of the wood as between the Sinhala and Tamil areas of historical habitation in the island when he had the opportunity to have done so permanently. He has thus left behind this continuing, festering and destabilising problem at India's southern tip up as his granfather had done in the Kashmir problem at India's northern tip through a similar myopism in failing to expel completely Pakistani tribal marauders. Internataional law was in both cases on India's side - international aggression in Kashmir's case and the right of Self-Determination in the Tamil people's case usurped by the illegal 1972 Republican Constitution.

Contrast all this with what America has done in Grenad, or what Turkey has done in Cyprus, or what Suharto has done in East Timor effectively forestalling intervention by foreign interests or ideologies into their respective national security zones. India's failure has brought into play a whole gamut of foreign interventionists hostile to India's interests into these two areas of viatl interest to India. India should, therefore, now without any further delay reassert its leadership in the island and not withdraw from it. Such a foreign policy initiative would also strengthen the hand of the Deve Gowda Governement.

In this light the Council calls upon the Indian Government to use its enormous authority in calling upon the Sri lanka Government to lift immediately and completely the economic blockade put in place against the Tamil people for the past six years by the Sri lanka Government to halt all military operations with immediate effect and to seek a political solution with international mediation because there is no other just and equitable way.

If India fails to give the lead in this direction at this critical juncture, history would never forgive her. It would mean the continued decimation of the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan Govern-

ment by bombing, shelling, starvation, malnutrition, exposure and disease made possible by unlimited supplies of finance and weapony provided by erstwhile colonialist and neo-colonialsit powers in pursuit of the globalisation of their economic, military and political power in this region.That can only diminish India and rob her of her rightful role. But that can never defeat The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam because they get their supplies from Sri lankan military sources located at their doorstep and their morale is unbreakable because they are carrying out the mandate for a separate state of Tamil Eelam given by the Tamil people in the Democratic General Elections of 1977 in exercise of their Right of Self-Determination.

It is incomprehensible to us that the basis of the Narasimha Rao Government's policy that the Tamil people's struggle for a separate state of Tamil Eelam would adversely affect Tamil Nadu's intergration in the Indian Union could have been seriously and consistently entertained by Indian policy planners when a similar such bogey held out in respect of West Bengal by Yahaya Khan was ignored by Mme Indira Gandhi in respect of her policy towards Bangladesh . On the contrary, the independence of Bangladesh strengthened the Indian Union as never before.

On the other hand, if the extermination of Tamil people in Sri lanka continues as of now unhindered by India, it does not need any imagination to visualise that the Tamil people of Tamil Nadu and of the world would not much longer sit idly by. The patience of the Tamil people the world over is already wearing thin.

There is nothing wrong for India to change course in respect of the Tamil Eelam struggle as the Americans did in Somalia their confrontation with Aidid in the light of a developing volatile situation. The pressing need of the hour is for India to raise its voice and call for immediate and complete lifting of the Economic Blockade against the Tamil people with international intervention to monitor it . If the Sri Lankan Government refuses to comply then India's must do what she has done before, namely, send in her war planes into Sri Lankan Air-Space, with or without permission of the authorities there, and airdrop supplies to the Tamil Civilians.

Moreover, such a course of action falls in line with the International Community's professed humanitarian concerns as well as fits in with the present International Security situation fo India and the pressures the world over to bring about peaceful settlements of International Conflicts such as in Mindanao, Cambodia, Chechnya and Bosnia through the intervention of regional powers. Further as pointed out by Mme. Indira Gandhi for India Sri lanka is not just another country.

Representatives of the CAWT plan to visit India in February 1997 and we would be most honoured if Your Excellency would be kind enough to meet our Representatives to enable them to convey to Your Excellency our congratulations on your appointment as Prime Minister of India as well as to further elaborate on the Sri Lankan Issuue. We plan to be in New Delhi and call onYour Excellency on or about Monday, 10 February 1997 at Your Excellency's convenience. We look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

We take the liberty of extending copies if this letter to the undermentioned as we propose to call on them as well in this connection after meeting with you.

We also attach brief Bio-data on ourselves for Your Excellency is perusal.

With Warmest Best Wishes

We remain

K.THILLAINATHAN
(President)

PERU A. TAMILMANI
(Hony. Secretary)

Was it mass drowning or a Greek mystery ?

All illegal immigrants seeking western asylum At least 45 Tamils were among those drowned in the high seas between Greece and Malta on a cold wintry night on Christmas Eve. But according to survivors who were eye witnesses to a disastro collision between a trawler carrying 148 passengers, and a ship 142 of those in the trawler had perished, six of them being saved. It is feared that all 142 of them were Sri Lankans, and Tamils with a few exceptions.

It is reported that on the night of 9th December, 454 South Asians, - Sri Lankans, Indians and Pakistanis, had set sail from the Egyptian port of Alexandria, with the eventual destination being Italy. After several days and being transferred twice to other ships, 290 of them were put on board a trawler, but it developed mechanical trouble. While it is feared that practically all the trawler passengers perished in the waters, it could include-148 Tamils, according to one report.

Despite eye witness accounts of the survivors in the ship who saw the sinking of the trawler along with the passengers, Greek police maintained that they saw no signs of the wreckage nor the bodies of those who were drowned. Was it a conspiracy of silence on the part of everyone, including the news agencies that no news of the disaster was available for several days, and that information was scanty even after the news broke out?

It is however known that more than 50 Tamil survivors are now in Greek jails, possibly awaiting deportation. The names of 40 of them were published by the Paris-based Tamil weekly, the *EELAMURASU*, in its special edition of 4th January. The paper also gave the names of another 40 Tamils who were among those feared drowned.

It was later reported that the agent in Colombo who had made the arrangements for the victims' travel had decamped to Singapore. ■

Why B.B.C. correspondent could not make contact with Tamil rebels

Flora Botsford tells of Govt. threat

"When I was offered an exclusive interview recently, with someone from the rebel side, it was made very clear to me that if I interviewed this person, if I travelled to interview this person, my life would be a misery when I got back; I might even have to leave the country..."

This was what BBC's Colombo correspondent Flora Botsford said in a Telephone Interview on BBC World Service on 6th January '97 She was talking to the presenter of the "OUTLOOK" programme, Barbara Meyer.

Here is the full text of the interview:

Barbara-Meyer: The (Sri Lankan) government's commitment to Press freedom appears to be falling foul of the long ethnic conflict with the Tamil Tigers. In the latest incident a news director of the Independent Television Network (TNL) has been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The arrest of Wickremasinghe has led fellow journalists to demonstrate for an end to intimidation. Flora Botsford, the BBC correspondent in Colombo joined me with the details.

B.M.: *What has she been charged with?*

F.B.: She's been charged with being responsible for the broadcast of an allegedly incorrect news item which was sent out a couple of weeks ago, which was about an attack by Tamil Tiger rebels on a police post in Eastern Sri Lanka, and it appears that although the substance of the report wasn't incorrect, it didn't actually use the words that had been given by tne military officials in Colombo.

Therefore it didn't tie in with their view of events. I think they're not allowed to comment about the details of the case, but although other media organisations did report the same event, the government didn't like the way that TNL did it. I think there may be a political background to all of this because we have to remember that TNL, the Television station in question is owned by the brother of the Opposition leader.

In fact the woman arrested is the niece of the Opposition leader and although the government wants the media to be saying what the government wants it to say, obviously if you allow the opposition to own media broadcasting organisations then perhaps they are going to take an anti-government stance, and perhaps that's what the government isn't happy with.

B.M.: *So she's been charged with offences against the Terrorism Act?*

F.B.: Exactly. Which is very peculiar but on the other hand there is a state of emergency in Sri Lanka and the government does have the right to arrest and question and detain anyone it feels is threatening the nation's security. In this instance she's been charged under a clause of the Act which talks about the "danger of communal violence erupting". In other words if you get a report wrong, maybe there would be a backlash against one of the ethnic communities here and that would increase tensions in the country. That's what the government is alleging in this case.

B.M.: *What do you think about it all?*

F.B.: I think this government really hasn't been able to handle the idea of an independent media. It had all the goodwill in the world when it was electioneering in 1994 and when it first came to power. But two years down the line it's beginning to realise that the independent media can sometimes take a critical stance. It can also report things quickly, it can report things that it wants to report, in the way that it wants to report them and the government really hasn't lost touch with the old way of doing things which was when the media was completely under state control.

B.M.: *And yet in 1994 when the government came into power they made a very clear pledge that press freedom was a high priority.*

F.B.: They certainly did. And I think it was. I think the government had seen for many years the United National Party in power abusing the Press and controlling the press and it had a firm commitment then to maintaining a free press. On the other hand now that it has been in power for two years it's seen the downside of that. It's seen that the government can be criticised, military operations can be criticised, the President herself can be criticised, and that's not

jkpo;j; Nirpa Mtzr; Rtbfs;

something she's used to.

For instance, recently now, she's taking the Editor of the SUNDAY TIMES to court for criminal defamation, instead of just-taking it through the civil courts as a normal libel case would be. Lawyers say this has never happened here before. She's actually criminally charged him with defaming her. And this was only a small gossip column - it wasn't even a major article - which mentioned her going to a party with a colleague late at night and leaving by a back entrance at two in the morning. It didn't say much about her perhaps, except that she was enjoying her spare time. But she took objection to it and it is going all the way through the courts.

She is someone who is used to having a good life, to leading a free life and obviously now she's very restrained by the security measures which protect her from possible attacks by Tamil Tigers. And her life is very constrained and therefore anything she does in her spare time is suddenly the highlight of interest here and she's not happy with that.

B.M.: *It's perhaps not so surprising that the government is sensitive though, about the direct reporting of military matters*

F.B.: No it's not. I mean we have to remember that there is a war on and that morale is important to the state of the nation and it's very important to the military sources who on a daily basis are undergoing dangerous work. They're at threat of the Tamil Tigers at any time of the day or night. So the government is worried that any wrong reporting could threaten their efforts to bring peace to the country.

On the other hand I don't think they've realised how important the media can be and how the media in fact can be used as an ally. And we have to remember that the Tamil Tigers are using the media very effectively indeed. They know the value of public relations. They know how to approach the media. They know the kind of information that the media is interested in and they're happy to use the media. If the government was more effective in doing the same thing perhaps they would find the war more easy to win.

> ***"It was a choice between `getting a good story...' and maintaining my job here, and that wasn't particularly pleasant."***

B.M.: *But I gather there have been incidents where reporters have been asked to write very specific stories on behalf of the government effort.*

F.B.: Recently, some journalists were taken up to an area in the North which the government had recently captured from the Tamil Tigers and none of the international media was invited. Only local journalists were invited... and they were really ... it was spelt out very clearly to them... that this was to be used as an example to boost the army recruitment drive and certainly some of the journalists weren't very happy with that.

On the other hand, if you read the newspapers here they really do tend to take a fairly soft line with the government. There are fairly glowing reports, for instance when we went up to Jaffna to again see an area which was recently recaptured by the government forces. Most of the reports in the papers were very glowing, not remotely critical of what the government or the security forces were doing and that's the general rule here. In other words the government doesn't usually have much to worry about.

B.M.: ***Where does this leave you, as a BBC correspondent, Flora ?***

F.B.: That's a very difficult thing to answer. I mean there are no direct threats against me. On the other hand .... and I won't go into details ... when I was offered an exclusive interview, recently, with someone from the rebel side, it was made very clear to me that if I interviewed this person, if I travelled to interview this person, my life would be a misery when I got back I might even have to leave the country.

Now that didn't make me very happy. On the other hand the BBC were not keen for me to do it for security reasons, for reasons of my own personal safety.But I had to bear in mind, very clearly that it was a choice between "getting a good story" - as a journalist, as every journalist always wants to do, and maintaining my job here, and that wasn't particularly pleasant.

JAYEWARDENE'S YEARS OF POWER

A Contemporary Assessment (1987)

Part II

(Continued from previous issue)

S.Sivanayagam

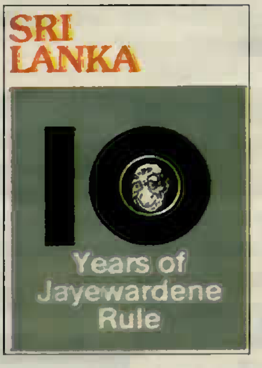
The fact that a 7-year political dormancy separated Junius Richard Jayewardene's years of power and his death at the age of 90 may have had something to do with the charitable references, and the flattering obituaries and cosmetic acclaim that he earned at his death.

Public memory being what it is, short, and often selective, HOT SPRING brings to its readers the second part of a contemporary assessment and narrative of Jayewardene's years of power, written and published in 1987.

IN a 40-page booklet, titled 10 YEARS OF JAYEWARDENE RULE, the author S. Sivanayagam covered the years 1977 - 1987, and records a chunk of history that was both dark and depressing, and illustrative of the ignoble style of Jayewardene's governance.

Tyranny of the majority

History never waits for Prime Ministers and Presidents. There is a "Take it or leave it" relentlessness about all historical processes. As it turned out, history began to overtake Mr. Jayewardene, and with him the Sinhalese, as well as the Tamil people. To the Sinhalese, the opportunity has been lost. To the Tamils the die has been cast. The more Jayewardene tried to preserve Sinhala interests at the expense of Tamil rights, the stronger became the Tamil militancy. Nations, like individuals, become oppressors in mind when they lack -not "political will" which is an evasive concept-but a keen sense of justice. Writing on the "Tyranny of the Majority" in his book DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA (described as the "first philosophical book ever written on Democracy), Alexis de Tocqueville said:



> "I regard it as an impious and detestable maxim that in matters of government the majority of a people has the right to do everything, and nevertheless I place the origin of all powers in the will of the majority. Am I in contradiction with myself ? There is one law which has been made, or at least adopted, not by the majority of this or that people, but by the majority of all men. That law is justice. Justice therefore forms the boundary to each people's right. A nation is like a jury entrusted to represent universal society and: to apply the justice which is its law. Should the jury representing society have greater powers than that very society whose laws it applies? Consequently when I refuse to obey an unjust law, I by no means deny the majority's right to give orders; I only appeal from the sovereignty of the people to the sovereignty of the human race...
>
> "(So) when I see the right and capacity to do all given to any authority whatsoever, whether it be called people or king, democracy or aristocracy, and whether the scene of action is a monarchy or a republic, I say: the germ of tyranny is there, and I will go look for other laws under which to live.."

If the Tamil in Sri Lanka today has become either a refugee or a militant, it only means that, each in his own way is looking "for other laws under which to live" Every law and every Constitution in Sri Lanka since Independence has gone against the Tamils, both by commission and omission. The 1948 Constitution made no provisions concerning citizenship. That was an omission. The Ceylon Citizenship Act, 18 of 1948 deprived one million plantation Tamils of their nationality and citizenship. The Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act of 1949 deprived the same people of their franchise, thereby making them both stateless and voteless. These were both acts of commission and a violation of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says "Everyone has the right to a nationality." In 1956, the Official Languages Act made Sinhala the only official language, violating, as did the previous laws, Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution which provided, "No... law shall . make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable; or confer on persons or on any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions." While Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake and Prime Minister S.W R.D. Bandaranaike disregarded this very minimal protection given to the minorities, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike went one better by sweeping it away altogether under the new Republican Constitution that she enacted in 1972. That constitution enshrined Sinhala as the only official language, and gave "foremost place" to Buddhism, thereby conferring premier status upon both the language and the religion of the majority Sinhalese. The 1978 Constitution promulgated by Jayewardene brought more subtlety. It accorded Tamil the status of a "national language", on paper, while giving nothing away to Tamils in practice. But the clever Mr. Jayewardene, unlike the, brash Mrs. Bandaranaike, was in a position to tell a dupable world that he had made "concessions" to Tamils! Academic researchers who base their knowledge more from dusty bookshelves than from empirical study, have been faithfully recording this point in Mr. Jayewardene's favour.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. Jayewardene who has been ruling Sri Lanka under a continuous, uninterrupted State of Emergency for the past four years (since May 1983) has however proved to be the worst law-maker for the Tamils. His crowning "achievement" has been the Prevention of Terrorism Act. LAWASIA report (Democracy in Peril. Sri Lanka: A Country in Crisis, Report to the LAWASIA Human Flights Standing Cornmittee, by Patricia Hyndman, observes:)

"This legislation (The Prevention of Terrorism Act) was enacted in 1979 as a temporary measure and entitled **The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.** In July 1982, the Act, despite the indications Of its temporary nature still contained in the title, was made a part of the permanent law of the land. This step gives cause for considerable concern as the legislation (hereinafter, for the sake of brevity, referred to as **The Prevention of Terrorism Act**) contains provisions which are in conflict with several of the Articles of **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** to which Sri Lanka is a signatory.

"Any government undeniabiy has an extremely difficult task when dealing with intransigent militant groups bent on achieving their aims through violent methods. However, removal of the causes, the grievances which are seen to provide a rationale for the violence, is the only effective way to resolve the problem in the long-term. Further, on the practical side, there is a good deal of evidence, both from experience within Sri Lanka and elsewhere, which suggests that harsh legislation of this kind doss not in fact assist in combatting insurgency.

"In Sri Lanka it seems clear that support for the militant groups has grown in the northern and eastern provinces as more and more has been heard about the ill-treatment of those held in detention Under the authority of **The Prevention of Terrorism Act.**

"Under the legislation those "connected with or concerned in or reasonably suspected of being connected with or concerned in any Unlawful activity" become, without any further justification, subject to the exercise of very wide powers. "unlawful activity" is a concept which receives an extremely wide definition and embraces comparatively minor offences. The powers conferred by this legislation have been used almost exclusively against Tamils. They permit arrests, without warrant, of suspects, search of premises and vehicles, seizure of documents, the taking of persons"to any place", for interrogation, the taking of measures for identificationi and the restriction of these persons' movements and activities.

"The Act brings within its ambit even actions committed **before** its enactment, although, at the time the acts were committed they may not have contravened any law then in existence,.. section 9 provides that suspects under the Act may be detained "in such place and subject to such conditions as may be determined by the Minister" and that detainees may be held without trial for successive periods of three months up to a maximum of eighteen months. Detainees are often held, not in ordinary prisons, but in army camps, and sometimes in Police stations. Even when charged and awaiting trial, and during trial, the Secretary to the Minister may order the detained to be held in any place and subject to any conditions he directs.

"The Act provides for prison terms which range from five to twenty years, and life imprisonment, for accused persons who are convicted. There is no requirement that detainees be brought before a magistrate upon detection ....."

Eight years aftar the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, it has now been proved by experience that if the Act was intended to curb

violence, it has not merely failed to do so; it has spawned even more violence. But there is more to it in violence than the gun and the bomb. During his ten-year dispensation, Mr. Jayewardene has not only intensified it, he has perpetuated violence and institutionalised it. There is an all -pervasive aura of disquiet in the whole island, let alone the killings in the North-East and the fear of bombs in Colombo. The Sri Lankan mass media has been actively disseminating violence in thought, word and spirit. It can be said without hesitation that in no other country in the world, democracy or otherwise, will one find language being used with such barbarous intent as in the political columns of the daily Press in Colombo. The fierceness of editorial expression, sometimes bordering on hysteria, along with reader responses which are equally frenzied (particularly in references to neighbour India) would seem to be a manifestation of a sad decline in moral sensibility; and a grievous blot on Sinhala society which despite occasional violence in the mass, has produced generations of men with refinement, poise, grace and good humour in all professions, and in a variety of callings.

This writer who has over a period of twenty five years worked in Colombo, and associated himself with several men and women of the Sinhala community in the fields of Journalism, Literature, Advertising, Broadcasting, Tourism promotion, is appalled at the shocking degeneration in thinking of a growing cross-section of persons manning these fields today. This is a distressing phenomenon, the blame for which should be placed fairly and squarely at Mr. Jayewardene's door.

"No confidence" motion against Amirthalingam

On the 3rd April, 1979, during the second year of rule of President Jayewardene there took place a debate, if it could be called one, in the Parliament of Sri Lanka. A Minister in Mr. Jayewardene's Cabinet, Mr. Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, had moved a motion condemning the Leader of the Opposition Mr. A. Amirthalingam (the first Tamil to hold that office) and his wife Mrs. Amirthalingam for statements alleged to have been made by both of them while they were on a visit to India. Two years earlier, speaking as Prime Minister on 18th August 1977, Mr. Jayewardene said: (read above) "The vast majority of people in this country have not got the restraint and the reserve that Members of Parliament, particularly those in the Front ranks have been used to...; The total absence of "restraint" and "reserve" in the language used by Mr. Jayewardene's "Front rank" Minister Mr. Mathew on this particular day and in the country's highest forum, the Parliament, will surely rank among the worst displays of verbal violence in any forum in the world *(Hansard, Vol. 4, No. 13, 3rd April 1979).*

Discussion in Parliament on how to kill the Leader of Opposition!

Two years later, on the 23rd and 24th July, 1981, there took place in Mr. Jayewardene's Parliament an unprecedented bizarre occurrence. The ruling Government party decided to move a vote of no confidence on the Tamil Leader of the Opposition! With the diminutive Opposition consisting of the TULF and the SLFP boycotting the proceedings, it became an-all-Government show of verbal pyrotechnics. The motion was nevertheless pressed to a vote, and good it was for the soul of everybody that it was done, because it demonstrated effectively how few of Mr. Jayewardene's Members of Parliament to whom he attributed "restraint" and "reserve" could be depended upon to detach themselves from the spirit of rancour and abuse that prevailed in the House those two days. The House divided with 121 Members voting for the motion, and two declining to vote. It is worth recording for posterity the names of the two who declined. One was the Minister for Rural Industrial Development and Plantation Tamils leader **Mr. S. Thondaman,** and the other, a Sinhalese, the Deputy Minister of Justice **Mr. Shelton Ranaraja.**

What transpired during the two days of proceedings could best be described as "verbal terrorism". At least two of the Members of Parliament speculated on the possibility of killing Mr. Amirthalingam and suggested ways and means of how best it could be done. One suggested the traditional punishment meted out to traitors by the Kandyan Sinhalese kings: rope two arecanut trees together, tie his legs to the two trees and cut the rope, so that he would be torn into two. Another member came out with a more ingenious idea. He said- "...

> Even during the time of the Sinhalese kings the kings of every country, when there was war, they had to fight back. Even King Asoka, before he came to that prestigious position of world history, was a person who fought tooth and nail for his country, for his people, and prevented wars. Now, Sir, if you take it in that stride, what should we do to this so-called leader of the Tamils ? if I were given the power, I would tie him to the nearest concrete post in this building and horse-whip him till I raise him to his wits. Thereafter let anybody do anything he likes-throw him to the Beira (lake) or to the sea, because he will be so mutilated that I do not think there will be life in him,..."

Violence by word and thought

The spirit of violence during the Jayewardene rule was sustained as could be seen, not merely by deed:, but by word and thought. But this itself was part of a vicious cycle in which unjust laws bred resistance; resistance, even when non-violent, was put down with violence; and this in turn breeding counter-violence; and counter-violence sought to be met with tougher laws. On the 22nd May, 1978, the Government introduced the **"Proscribing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Other Similar Organisations Law, No. 16 of 1978."** In its pathetic belief that a law is substitute for wisdom, the Government limited the period of the proscription to one year. One year later, on the 21st May, 1979, it was found necessary to bring another Bill, amending the earlier Act by substituting in Section 15 fhe words "two years" in place of "one year".

"Bull" Weeratunga in Jaffna

But when it was discovered by July the same year that the exercise was becoming profitless, it was decided to replace the earlier law proscribing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by a wider one **-the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.** By continuously misguiding himself into thinking that if one law does not work, a more tough one will, he believed that he was assured of success this time. This belief was fortified by his faith in some measures he had already taken. On July 11, 1979, he had appointed his kinsman, Brigadier T.I. "Bull" Weeratunga, then Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army as "overall Commander of the Security Forces in the administrative district of Jaffna", and on July 14 issued the following "imperial" decree:

> "It will be your duty to eliminate in accordance with the laws of the land the menace of terrorism in all its forms from the island, and more especially from the Jaffna district. I will place at your disposal all resources of the State I earnestly request all law-abiding citizens to give their co-operation to you. This task has to be performed by you and completed before the 31st December, 1979."

On the same day the Cabinet decided to clamp down a state of emergency in the Jaffna district, and the President invoked provisions of the Public Security Act which gave the Police and the armed forces the power to dispose of dead bodies without an inquest. This resulted in the indiscriminate arrests and torture of Tamil youths and the disappearance of another three within the first twenty four hours of the expected gazetting of the "disposal of dead bodies without an inquest" order. Unfortunately for the Brigadier, in his urge to dispose of dead bodies without inquests he jumped the gun, and even before the gazetting of the order was notified, the bodies of two Tamil youths, Inbam and Selvam, were discovered in the Pannai causeway, badly mutilated and showing evident signs of prolonge torture. The inquests were held, and several unsavoury facts came to light. Referring to the reign of Army and Police terror in Jaffna during this period, Amnesty International in its memorandum to the President (1980) said:

> "Various methods of torture have been used by both the police and the army in the period immediately after the emergency declaration, including suspending people upside down by the toes while placing their head in a bag with suffocating fumes of burning chillies, prolonged and severe beatings, insertion of pins in the finger tips and the application of broken chillies and biting ants to sensitive parts of the body and threats of execution. After these and other methods of torture had been applied, statements were extracted and recorded".

Disposal of dead bodies without inquests

On the 31st December 1979, Brigadier Weeratunga duly reported to Mr. Jayewardene that as envisaged in the Presidential decree of July 14, his mission was accomplished. As his reward today, he is in charge of another mission-the Sri Lankan High Commission in Canada. That Mr. Tissa Weeratunga had failed in his mission is no longer a debating matter in 1987. But it is certainly a moot point whether President Jayewardene should have chosen to present a Brigadier with a black record as "quid pro quo" for the consistent kindness shown to his country by an aid-giving liberal democracy such as Canada! A posting in Pakistan, for example, would not have been thought too inappropriate because soldiers of fortune are not unknown in that country. Jaffna was in an angrier mood by the time the Brigadier left the place; and so, understandably was President Jayewardene because Tamil militancy was gaining a bigger motivation. The vast mass of tho Tamil people both within as well as the growing numbers of expatriates in India and in the West were beginning to accept armed struggle as the only option that remained. This of course left Mr. Jayewardene facing a defiance that he had hardly expected from a. people who for generations had produced meek, obedient quill-drivers in Government departments and studious Tamil youths with text books always tucked under their arms, and whenever set upon by Sinhala mobs in the South had offered no resistance whatever, but only fled.

(To be continued in the next issue)

The Indian Scene

Is the Deve Gowda govt. living on borrowed time?

Congress (1) Party lawmakers elected the party's president, Sitaram Kesri, as their new parliamentary leader on January 3rd, but his declarations of support for India's minority government were immediately undercut by senior party officials.

New power centre: Sonia Gandhi flanked by Narasimha Rao's rival Arjun Singh (left) and Sitaram Kesri.

After his election, Mr.Kesri, who replaced former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao as the head of the Congress Parliamentary party, immediately sought to dispel rumors that a reinvigorated Congress would set out to challenge the ruling minority coalition, the United Front, led by Prime Minister H.D.Deve Gowda.

"All this talk about our withdrawing support to the United Front is wrong;" he told the parliamentary group. "It is a ploy to frighten you."

But a Kesri aide later dismissed the remark. "It was a tactical comment," he said.

And a former minister declared: "I won't give the government six months. The Congress will form its own government soon, be sure of that."

To survive, the center-left United Front, which has only about 190 seats, needs support from the 142 Congress party members in the 545 seats lower house of parliament.

Mr.Kesri became president of the Congress party in September after Mr.Rao, who had spearheaded a drive to open up India's economy, stepped down in the wake of corruption charges.

Mr.Rao, who was Prime Minister from 1991 until last May, when the party suffered its worst-ever defeat in the general elections, quit as leader of the parliamentary group last month. An Indian court granted Mr.Rao bail Friday in a corruption case in which he is accused of bribing four opposition lawmakers in 1993 to save his government.

With the exit of Narasimha Rao from the Congress hierarchy, a new power centre has emerged, with Sitaram Kesri in the driver's seat, but much of the back seat driving being done by none other than Rajiv Gandhi's widow, Sonia. South Asia has developed a tradition of propelling widows into seats of power, Sri Lanka's Srima Bandaranaike being the pioneer in the business. Sonia who has been brushing off earlier entreaties to join the Congress, is now believed to be receptive , and in fact has been taking, a keen interest in affairs, to the point of granting an interview even to the visiting EPDPs:Douglas Devananda!

Unlike other widows who came into political office, Sonia is not a born national of the country, but this disability is more than compensated by several other factors. An opinion poll taken by an Indian weekly, indicates, that 90 percent of the respondents thought that Sonia's formal entry into the Congress would improve the image of the party. Given the un-charismatic image of Prime Ministers like Narasimha Rao and Deve Gowda, it would not be surprising for people to want some glamour at the top, but apart from that the Nehru dynasty fixation in India is a compelling urge, and Italian or otherwise, the mantle of that dynasty has now unquestionably fallen on Sonia.

Prime Minister Deve Gowda who is desperately in need of Congress support, was assured of it as long as Narasimha Rao held power, but under a rejuvenated Congress with Sonia at the head, the chances are that the country could go in for another elections before 1997 is out.

India has CIA problems

Walter Pincus of The Washington Post reports from Washington:

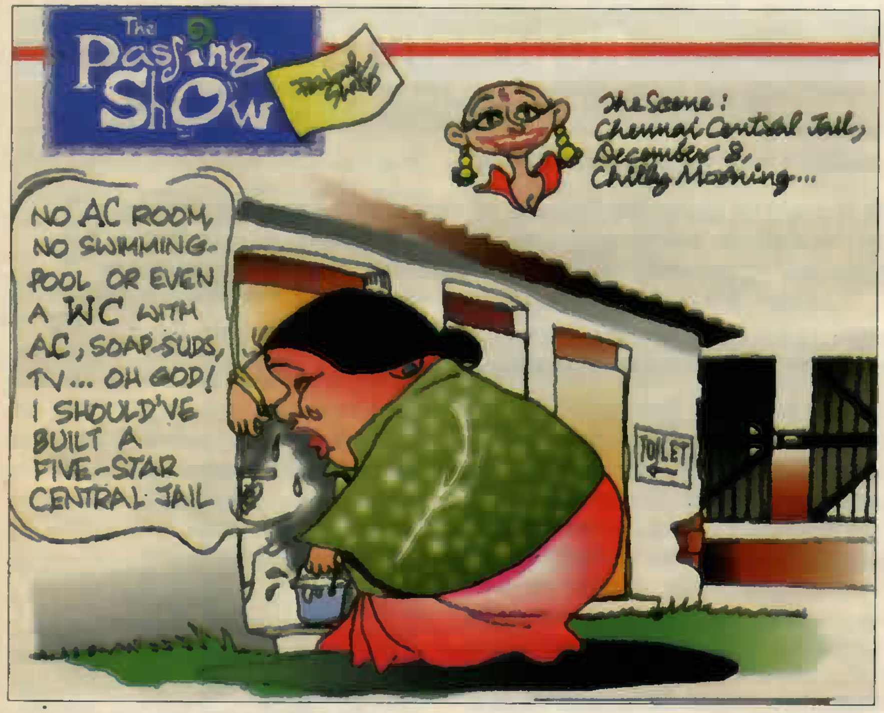
India may request the departure of one or more CIA or other American officials at the U.S Embassy in New Delhi who met with India's counter intelligence chief, leading to his resingnation last month because the meetings supposedly were unauthorized.

The American ambassador, Frank Wisner, recently returned to New Delhi and is expected to meet with Indian officials, according to people familiar with the matter. They said he would oppose any effort to make American officials leave.

Last month, Indian newspapers reported thatrr Rattan Sehgal, the No.4 official in the Interlligence Bureau, had suddenly resigned. The reports said Mr. Sehgal, whose job as countre-interlligence chief brought him into contact with foreign embssy officials, had failed to file reports about nine unauthorized meeting with U.S. diplomats, including the CIA station chief and two other agency officials who worked at the embassy.

The state department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, said that only one at the U.S. Embassy had been expelled or asked to leave, and called the matter an “internal affair of the Indian government.”

A spokesman for the Indian Embassy here said he had “no information about the matter.


The Passing Show
The Scene: Chennai Central Jail, December 8, Chilly Morning...
NO AC ROOM, NO SWIMMING-POOL OR EVEN A WC WITH AC, SOAP-SUDS, TV... OH GOD! I SHOULD'VE BUILT A FIVE-STAR CENTRAL JAIL
TOILET

THE WEEK cartoonist on Jayalalitha's 28 days in the Madras Jail.

Chandrika in India

By Jawed Naqvi NEW DELHI, Dec 25 (Reuter) - Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandarnaike Kumaratunga began a holiday in India on Christmas day after Tamil rebels began an undeclared Christmas truce in their 13-year old war, sources on both sides said. "There is peace in the air. We are confident 1997 will bring good news," one source close to her told Reuters. "Right now she is thinking more about peace than about war."

Indian and Sri Lankan officials played down reports of a link between Kumaratunga's visit and rumoured peace initiatives with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). "The president is at present on a private visit to India with her two children," a Sri Lankan Embassy statement said. She will meet Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda at the end of her visit, it added.

PTI said Kumaratunga arrived on Wednesday in the western city of Jodhpur where she will spend two days among its historic Rajput palaces. She plans to visit neighbouring Jaisalmer city later for a walk on the sand dunes. Her visit will be accompanied by tight security and the media are being kept well away.

Kumaratunga arrived in Delhi on Tuesday, two days after the LTTE released 16 captured Sinhalese fishermen as part of a Christmas truce; an LTTE source said. "This is a normal gesture during Christmas. If you want to read a deeper meaning into it, it's your business," he said.

LTTE sources said Kumaratunga's government had encouraged a peace initiative recently by an international humanitarian group but they gave no details. They said any progress towards peace with the LTTE would hinge on the government's attitude to rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's latest peace offer in November. Prabhakaran had demanded the withdrawal of Sri Lankan troops from Tamil areas as one of the conditions for resuming talks with Colombo, they said.

Social & Personal

Tamil girl wins 1st Prize in Poetry Competition

Aarani Ganesalingam of South Wimbledon won the First Prize in Under-8 age group of the poetry competition organised by Merton Young Poets.

More than 300 children of diverse communities in the London borough of Merton participated in the competition , which was supported by the Merton Council. The judges were:- Richard Kir Head Teacher, Park House Middle School, Wimbledon, Malcolm Parker, Chairman, Merton Arts Council and Poet and Councillor Patric Cunnane.

Other Tamil children who submitted "Highly Commended" or "Commended" entries were:

Over 12/under 16: Vino Siva (highly commended.) Over 12/under 16: Ramya Rajamanoharan (commended) Over 12 / under 16: Rupini Perinpanathan (commended) Over 8/under 12: Abi Ganesalingam(commended)

Poet and Councillor Patric Cunnane speaking at the Distributic of Awards function said: "Poetry wrestles us away from the TV and Video and puts us in touch with our feelings in the most direct way.". He congratulated Mr.T.Srikantharajah, Co-ordinator of Merton Young Poets for having organised the competition in Merton Borough for the first time.

All poems-that were entered for the competition have been published as a poetry anthology - HEAR MY VOICE, - Merton young Poets 1996. Available at 52, Kingsley Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8HF. (Tel:0181-543 2126).

OBITUARY

C.R.Tissainayagam

The death occurred on 6th January in Colombo of C.R.Tissainayagam after a brief illness. Mr.Tissainayagam (78), held several top posts in the Sri Lankan public sector. He was the son of the late civil engineer, G.S.Tissainayagam of Mathagal, Jaffna, and a brother of M.J.Tissainayagam, journalist and former Director of Information, and brother-in-law of former Supreme Court judge, T.W.Rajaratnam.

The last rites were performed at a private funeral on the 7th at the General Cemetery, Kanatte.

Appreciation

Albert Theagarajah Sabaratnam

A.T. Sabaratnam, distinguised former principal of many colleges in Sri Lanka, died in Wellington, New Zealand on the 21st November 96. He was born on December 23, 1915.

Educated at Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai, he obtained his BSc. degree at the University College, Colombo, and went to London for post graduate studies.

He taught first at St.Benedict's College, Colombo, and later joined government service. The introduction of the free education scheme in Sri Lanka, enabled him to use his management and tutorial skills to the utmost. He fully approved and endorsed the scheme, setting up Science Depts. and A-level classes in schools like Vantharamoolai Central, Velanai Central, Nelliaddy Central, Batticaloa Govt College, Stanley College. Many of these were listed as backward areas. His students are now professionals scattered all over the world.They remember him with great respect and affection.

Mr. Sabaratnam retired in 1967 to join The Education Dept. of the Govt of Zambia, where he set up the science faculty at Mkushy Govt college. He later moved to the Zambia Institute of Technology as a senior lecturer in chemistry. He returned to Sri Lanka in 1986, but after the death of his wife joined his daughters in Zealand.

He married Nallamma, eldest daughter of Mr& Mrs Coomarasamy of Kandy,and leaves behind three children Dr.Lakshmanan Sabaratnam (University of North Caroline), Mrs Prathushe Joseph and Mrs.Lakshmi Prendergast.

I can never get these thoughts out of my head...

Essay written at Fana High School,Bergen, Norway, by 16-year old Tamil girl, Jerin-Mary George.

(Translation from Norwegian)

I come from Sri Lanka. The reason for the civil war going on there is disagreement between the government in the south and us Tamils in the north. The government consists of Sinhalese, who are the majority. The Tamils are a minority. We have not enjoyed the same rights as the Sinhalese, and we have always been oppressed. Now, we have had enough - now we want our own state on the island.

Every Tamil surely has his or her own story or experience to relate, and I am no exception. I can never get these thoughts out of my head; I get goose-pimples whenever I think of what happened.

Early in the morning of the 18th March 1987 we heard that Sinhalese soldiers had succeeded in getting out of their base in Jaffna. Previously they had been prevented by the Tigers, but now they had managed it.

Our town is called Point Pedro. Airaraft flew over it and dropped lots of leaflets with a warning from the soldiers. The text read: "Everyone must go to either the churches or the temples. Anyone found in the houses will be shot immediately and unconditionally" Everyone . began to go to the churches and temples, but we, my mother, my brother and myself, did not want to. Do you know what happened to the people who obeyed the leaflets and went to the churches and temples? Some were shot, the women were raped and the youngsters were arrested. We wanted to stay at home. One of our neighbours wanted to stay with us; their house was a very large one in the main street, but ours was small and the next to the last in a side-street; we reckoned it was safer to hide at our place.

We had decided to stay at home regardless of what happene because we were fed up of moving. The house we were staying in was not our own.

Tamil school girl in Norway recalls Jaffna experience of 1987

Our own house had been in the main street on the shore. After a new decree prohibited anyone from living within 100 metres from the sea, we had to move and rented out a house 300 metres from the sea, in a side street.

About five in the afternoon we went into the bedroom and locked the door. There was little space, and there were seven of us: grandma, mother, myself, my brother, the neighbour's grandma, mother and daughter.

We heard shooting and dogs barking in the distance. Time passed. Around seven , the shots and the barking came closer. It was dark in the room. We didn't make a sound. We heard the houses in the main street being destroyed. Steps sounded in our side street. We heard the cruel soldiers talking Sinhalese. We shook where we sat and hardly dared to breathe. They came and kicked the street door, which was locked. They went away. On the other side of the house was a courtyard with a well; the soldiers drew water and washed.

Grandma's problem

Suddenly grandma said "I have to go to the loo, can't wait any longer". "Don't talk so loud", said mother. "If they see you go out, you know what will happen", she continued. Grandma fell silent. I was sorry for her, I understood how difficult it must have been for the old people. I wanted the loo as well, but didn't say anything The air in the room was very heavy; the neighbour's mother had asthma, couldn't get clean air. She wanted to cough, but couldn't allow herself !

Then we heard shouting and weeping from next door, the last house in the street. An old childless couple lived there; the lady had a niece the same age as myself. That day she was together with them. The soldiers went in and seized her by the arm. The old people wept and asked them to stop, in Tamil, whiah the soldiers did not understand. The girl cried "help" "help". We heard everything and did not know what to do. We became even more afraid and kept silent.

The shouting died away, and soon we could hardly hear the voices. The soldiers pointed at our house and asked, "Who are your neighbours?" "They have surely gone to the temple", answered the lady with a shaking voice. She didn't actually know that we were home,

The boy's cry

The night went on, but we,did not sleep. Our eyes would not close. We heard footsteps and shots still. We sat and stared at each other. "Amma! Amma!" came from a weak, shaky voice. We could hear that it was a boy, and we could hear someone beating him. He shouted louder, but after a while the voice faded again; in the end we heard nothing.

The 19th March dawned. We waited anxiously to see what was going to happen. We had a large bird cage in our garden, with about 20 lovebirds. When it got light, they used to wake up and sing. A soldier out for a walk discovered them. "Look here! Such a lot of birds", he said in Sinhalese. He jumped over the fence and came in. The street door was locked, so he shot the lock off, so that the other soldiers could come in and see. We shook, and could smell the cordite. Four soldiers came in to look at the birds. We heard the footsteps of a soldier approaching. He kicked in the door, but it didn't open. He kicked again harder, and now it opened. He was astonished to find that seven people had been there all night without being discovered. Everyone put their hands up and left the room. Since we were all women, except for my brother, perhaps they wouldn't shoot us right away.

Sinhala dialogue

A neighbour's daughter who was just then on vacation from the University of Kandy, in the south, could speak Sinhalese. The soldiers were pleased when she spoke Sinhalese. That was the reason why we weren't killed, and the brother of one of the soldiers studied together with her. There was now a more friendly atmosphere.

They said that we didn't need to be afraid, and that we could be safe at home, but we knew that they were not to be trusted. It was almost three days since we had last eaten properly, because the aircraft had been bombing the whole time in the last few days. We had to stay in the bomb shelter without food, but we were not hungry all the same.

Muslim soldier

The soldiers said that we could shower and do what we liked, except help the Tigers. We went to the loo and washed, otherwise we just sat there. We were afraid that they would shoot us. When I went to the well to fetch water, I looked around at every step. The soldiers gave us biscuits and some fruit; they insisted that we eat them, and we wondered whether they were poisoned. On the other hand, they could shoot us if we did not obey. So we ate them. We did not exchange a single word, just the neighbour's daughter talked with the soldiers in Sinhalese One of the officers (a Christian) told us to go to Colombo, or else we could perhaps get killed.

Around seven that day it began to get dark, though in March it did not normally get dark before about nine. I didn't know why, perhaps Nature was grieving too. Many soldiers had now come to our house. One came who was a Muslim and spoke Tamil. He wanted water, he said to mother, and he followed her to the kitchen. I could see that the soldier was very nervous. He said quickly, "Tonight some soldiers will come and rape the girls. Send them to the church or the temple." Mother was in despair, she didn't know what to do. The problem was to get out without being seen.

Many dead bodies

Together with the lady who lived next door, we three girls went to the temple by a back way. We reached it, and found it full of people. Everyone surrounded us and asked where we had been and how it had gone, but we didn't want to answer. It was not so easy to describe what we had experienced because we hadn't yet gotten over the shock.

We were told that there were many dead bodies in the streets, and that many people had been burnt to death in their houses. One of these was the poor taxi driver Arun whom because of his job everyone knew.

After two days the cruel soldiers left our town to go to another one. The whole town wept. At least one person in every family had been killed, burned or tortured. The only family that was lucky was our own, but we could not stop weeping anyway, when we saw the corpses of our friends and neighbours.

On the other side of our house was a cleared courtyard. It smelled bad, and we went in to see what it could be. There we found the corpse of a boy, and we understood that it was the boy who cried "Ammah! Ammah!" when we were hiding in the bedroom. We could not identify the body, as it was three days old and his body was already full of worms. He was later identified as the son of the taxi driver Arun - what an unhappy family, losing its father and son on the same day. I thought about the mother; how hard it had to be for her, when both the son and husband had been killed. She would have to be the breadwinner now.

Father & son killed

The boy smelt awful and could not be moved, as it fell to bits when we tried to lift it. We had to burn it there in the courtyard itself. Neither his brothers nor sisters nor his mother could come to see the body before it was cremated, because there was a curfew. Next day, only the skull and some bones were left.

I can never get the thoughts out of my head, the murders and the bodies. I still get the shakes and goose-pimples when I think about these events. A lot of other things happened which I have no words to write down. My only hope -is that we should get our own country as soon as possible. ■

I can never get these thoughts out of my head...

Sri Lanka: the public view & the hidden view

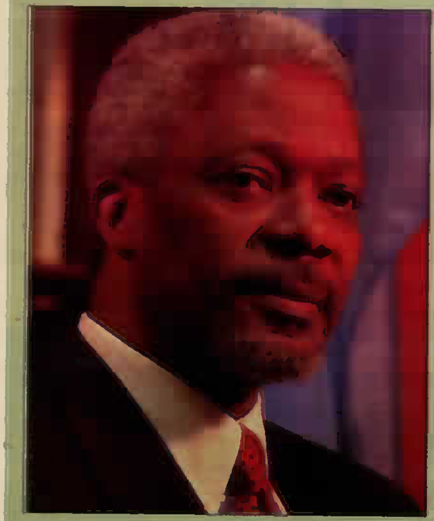
seen
unseen

The above is Picture Post card produced by TAMIL CONCERN, London

People

The new boss at the UN

The recent choice of Kofi Atta Annan for the top job of Secretary General at the U.N. put a welcome end to the unpleasant controversy over the outgoing Boutros BoutrosGhali's possible extension of term, a controversy that was sparked off by what was seen as a calculated ploy on the part of the Clinton administration.



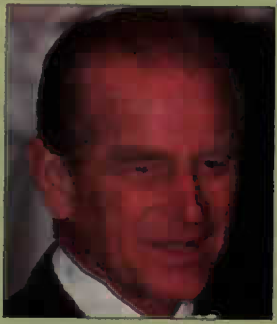
Kofi Annan is a soft-spoken Ghanian and the first black African to hold the job of Secretary General. . Unlike previous holders of the office, Kofi Annan has been a long-time executive of the Organisation that he now heads He speaks impeccable English, according to reports, and speaks French too, having gone to college in Geneva and worked at the UN there, where more people speak French than English

Born into a prominent family in Ghana,(then a British colony known as Gold Coast on April 8, 1938. Annan has always been known for his affable ways. He is twice married, first to a Nigerian, and later to a Swedish lawyer.

The Duke's faux pas

The Royal family in England is not unlike any other family; it has its share of problems. Apart from having to deal with gossips, divorces and displeasures, Queen Elizabeth II has also in her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, a man who often shoots from the lip on diverse subjects not connected with royalty.

His most recent faux pas was connected with the tragedy that all Britain mourned - the massacre of 16 school children in Dumblane. Scotland in March '96 The killer went about shooting with four handguns. Following the public outcry, the government introduced new anti-gun legislation. The Duke in a BBC interview tried to make out that sportsmen would be penalized by such laws and suggested that guns are no more dangerous than Cricket bats! He said: "If a cricketer suddenly decided to go into a school and batter a lot of people to death with a cricket bat, which he could do very easily' I mean. are you going to ban cricket bats". Relatives of the Dunblane victims were outraged by the Duke's stupid and unsympathetic analogy.



Buckingham Palace later published an apology.

Going, going, Gone

So Narasimha Rao has now been pushed into the periphery of Indian politics. On Rajiv Gandhi's death in May 1991. he became Congress partypresident, and in the June elections he became Prime Minister. Not a man endowed with charisma, he had the added disadvantage of being India's first Prime Minister from the South. At the May-June '96 elections he led the Congress party to its worst ever defeat. His political decline was not swift, but was made certain as corruption scandals began to surround him. With influential Congress colleagues turning against him. and a magistrate issuing summons on him to appear in court he decided to step down as Congress president in September last year In October, he became the first former Prime Minister to appear before a court of law for trial - as an accused in the St.Kitts forgery case. On December 19. Rao was forced to quit as Congress Parliamentary Party leader. thus losing the last vestige of power

Despite his long stint in politics at the centre, his manner of exit - in disgrace is the one that would he remembered against him.

Priyanka to marry

Once in the centre of speculation whether she would take to politics, Priyanka, daughter of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi is now reported to have nuptials in mind. Her suitor is Robert Wadehra, 26, businessman and man about-town, who owes his anglicised ftrst name to his Anglo-Indian mother. Robert is reported to be more short and stocky, unlike Priyanka who is tall and slim.

OUTLOOK magazine reports: Unlike her brother who went to study in the US and later in the UK, Priyanka chose to remain in India. Aggressive and self-assured, she speaks fluent Hindi without a trace of accent.... she is, according to a regular visitor to 10, Janpath (the Gandhi residence), every bit the granddaughter of Indira Gandhi. Priyanka loves crowds and connects with them easily. Fond of jeans and T-shirts at home. she is traditionally attired in public, like her mother.

Her lack of interest in academics pretty much follows the family tradition A graduate in psychology from Delhi's Jesus and Mary College, she taught for a while as a primary school teacher but gave that up

Given the Indian obsession with the Gandhi family, who knows, in Priyanka, one may have a future Indian Prime Minister t

A woman at the top

Another all-male bastion has fallen with the appointment of Madeline Albright to one of the most powerful jobs in the world that of Secretary of State in the U.S.government.

As the chief American representative at the United Nations she had been a skilLed diplomat and forceful speaker, but neverthless the appointment came as a surprise. Madeline Albright is a naturalized American citizen, whose family fled Nazism and Communism in Czechoslovakia.She fled her native country as a child when the Nazis invaded in- world War II, and again after the Communists took over. Aged 59. Madeline Korbel Albright is known to be tough, possibly the result of experiencing several adversities in early life.

She came with her parents to her foster country at the age of 11, went to public schools, married her college sweetheart but in 1982, it came as a shock to her when her hushand abruptly announced that the marriage was over. She is a mother of three daughters.

Nursing a dream

Barbara Gerke is a 30-year old German nurse, but now she is nursing an unusual dream - to put Ayurveda and Tibetan traditional medicine on the world map Working in a hospital near Dusseldorf' Barbara chanced on a book on Ayurveda which aroused her curiosity. That was more than eight years ago In November 1988 she landed in Bombay with 3,000 Deutsche-Marks, constituting her savings and some money given by her teacher. Barbara has made eight visits - to India since then, and in December '95 she founded the International Trust for Traditional Medicines (ITTM), 50 km. from Darjeeling in the hills.

Today researchers are translating books on Ayurveda and Sorig (Tibetan system of traditional healing) written in Sanskrit and Tibetan into English. A separate project has been launched to locate rare herbs mentioned in the Ayurvedic and Tibetan medical texts.

The "Living Saint"

At the age of 86, Mother Theresa, known as a living saint, is b-attling for her life at the Birla Heart Research Centre in Calcutta. In the last week of November she underwent angioplasty and surgery to free-two blocked arteries, but even by end-December her condition continued to be precarious.

Born as Agnes Gouxha Bejaxhu to Albanian peasants, the future Mother Theresa became a nun in 1927, and was first sent to Ireland and then to Calcutta, where she taught in girls school for almost 20 years Shortly after becoming head of the school, she had a spiritual experience in which she was called to devote herself to the people of Calcutta's slums. Since 1950, she has been running the Missionary Sisters of Charity, which has several thousand sisters and brothers working all over the world.

Mother Theresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

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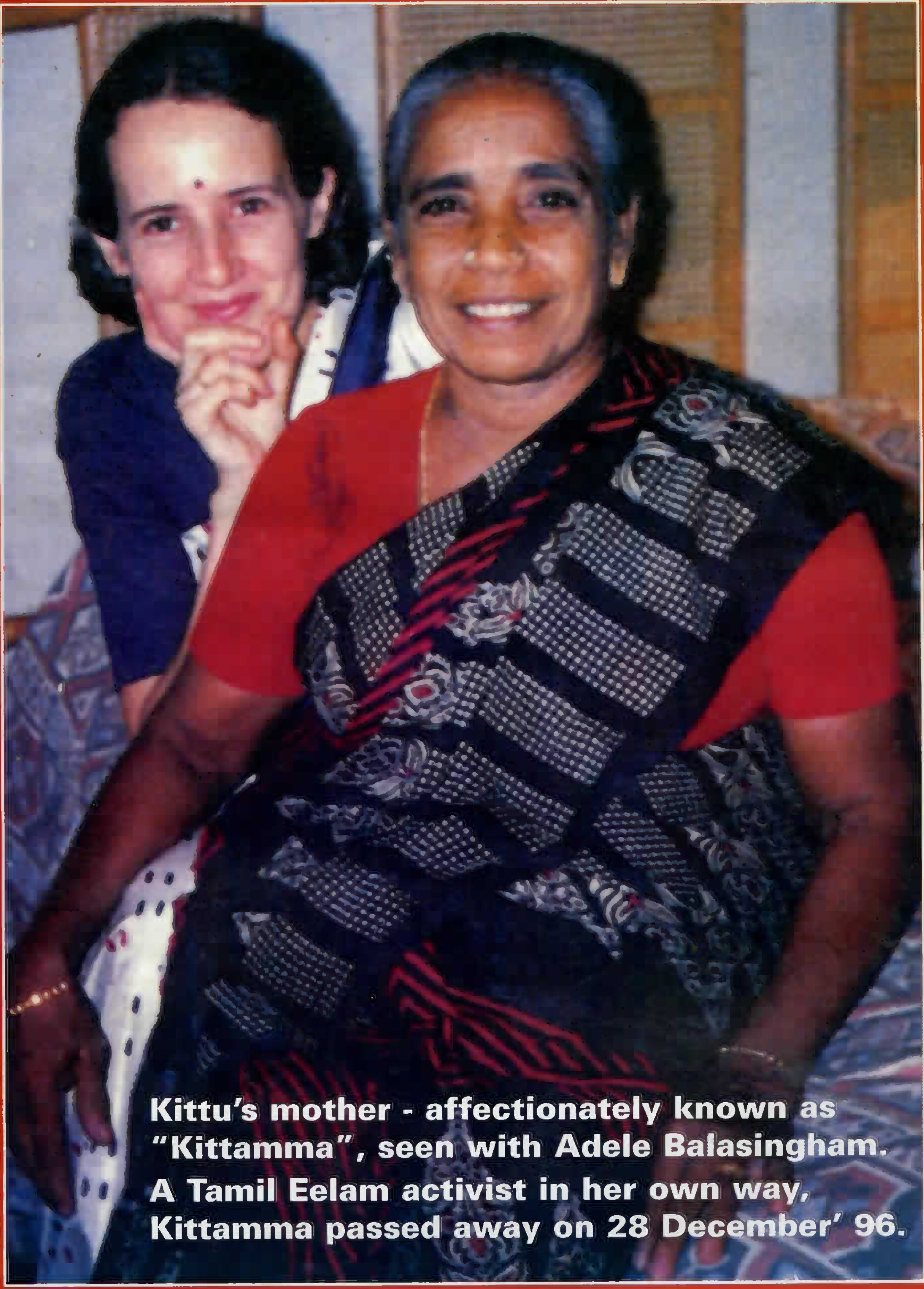

Kittu's mother - affectionately known as "Kittamma", seen with Adele Balasingham. A Tamil Eelam activist in her own way, Kittamma passed away on 28 December' 96.

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